

JACK WHITE
TAKES CARE OF BUSINESS

ARETHA
CLOSE UP!



MAG

Magazine

NEW ALBUM
EXCLUSIVE!

*"We had
to carouse
again!"*

Robert Plant & Alison Krauss

PLUS: LED ZEPPELIN IV AT 50!

154
REVIEWS
VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
SAINT ETIENNE, METALLICA
STURGILL SIMPSON
WARREN ELLIS
& MORE

**BOB
DYLAN**
HIS '80s
RECONSIDERED!

**THE WAR
ON DRUGS**
GET HIGHER

**LINDSEY
BUCKINGHAM**
MAC TO THE
FUTURE?

FAUST
"POP'S ULTIMATE
REVOLUTION"

AND!
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HEADSOU

ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

A globetrotting acid trip of an album, collecting rarities spanning GOAT's career: standalone singles, B-sides and two enormous brand new tracks!



JASON SHARP

THE TURNING CENTRE OF A STILL WORLD
CONSTELLATION LP / CD

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SWEET CRISIS

TRICKS ON MY MIND

HEADLINE RECORDS LP / CD

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10 000 RUSSOS

SUPERINERTIA

FUZZ CLUB LP / CD

Motorik psych-rock champions 10 000 Russos take a more synth-driven approach on their fifth album 'Superinertia', due out September 10th on Fuzz Club.



HAIKU SALUT

THE HILL, THE LIGHT, THE GHOST

SECRET NAME LP / CD

A beautiful study of ghosts and memory, this fifth album from Haiku Salut weaves spellbinding electronica, post-rock and neo-classical with evocative field recordings. "Poetic, bewitching" - Clash.



ALICIA WALTER

I AM ALICIA

SOOPER RECORDS LP / CD

Equipped with a "near-cosmic voice" (WIRED) in a "stratosphere of songwriting all her own" (Consequence), Alicia's debut embraces influences spanning from jazz & the classic composition of American standards to hip-hop & new wave to build her own brand of eclectic-pop.



EPHAT MUJURU & THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE

MBAAIRA

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA LP / CD
Mujuru was Zimbabwe's foremost mbira (thumb piano) player who brought Shona music to the world. Available outside Zimbabwe for the first time. All-acoustic, calming music for these times.



GA-20

DOES HOUND DOG TAYLOR: TRY IT...
YOU MIGHT LIKE IT!

KARMA CHIEF RECORDS LP / CD

Colemine Records in partnership with Alligator Records will release GA-20's new album. GA-20 Does Hound Dog Taylor, featuring 10 songs written or performed by the Chicago blues legend.



RED RIBBON

PLANET X

DANGER COLLECTIVE LP / CD

Red Ribbon's new album is a touching collection of her most innovative, striking songs to date. Planet X is the sound of a band pushed to the outer reaches of their creative comfort zones.



CHORUSING

HALF MIRROR

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Chorusing's debut album combines a homemade synthesizer and guitars with confessional folk songwriting, yielding cosmic yet earthly results. Clash calls it "hypnotic." RIYL Arthur Russell, Bonnie Prince Billy, Elephant Micah.

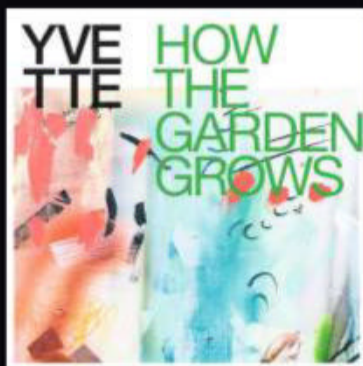


SUUNS

THE WITNESS

JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS LP / CD

The Witness finds the band holding a magnifying glass over their own state of playing & performing. While the world becomes a more distorted place, The Witness extends a sonic lifeline to latch onto, one bolstered by years of friendship, chemistry & trust.



YVETTE

HOW THE GARDEN GROWS

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Post-industrial / neo-no wave music evoking the spirit of This Heat, Throbbing Gristle, and Cabaret Voltaire. NME says they're "one of the best" and Pitchfork calls them "authoritative....and transfixing."

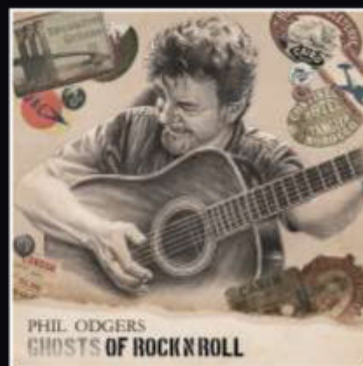


HELVETIA

ESSENTIAL ALIENS

JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS LP

Essential Aliens takes all the elements of the Helvetia sound & simplifies—there is no reverb or delay used on this record. Short blasts of stoner chill with no specific genre in mind, this is like forever rummaging through a radio dial looking for weird tunes.

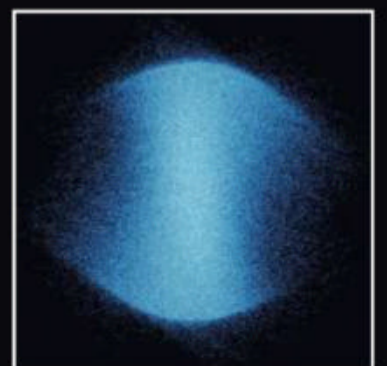


PHIL ODGERS

GHOSTS OF ROCK N ROLL

VINYL STAR CD

The Men They Couldn't Hang frontman, Phil 'Swill' Odgers, launches out of lockdown with this outstanding new album brimming with spirit, blood, sweat and tears.



DEAFHEAVEN

INFINITE GRANITE

SARGENT HOUSE LP / CD

Deafheaven return with their new album Infinite Granite. Produced by Justin Meldal-Johnsen (M83, Wolf Alice), Infinite Granite finds the band embarking on a new chapter of defiant beauty.

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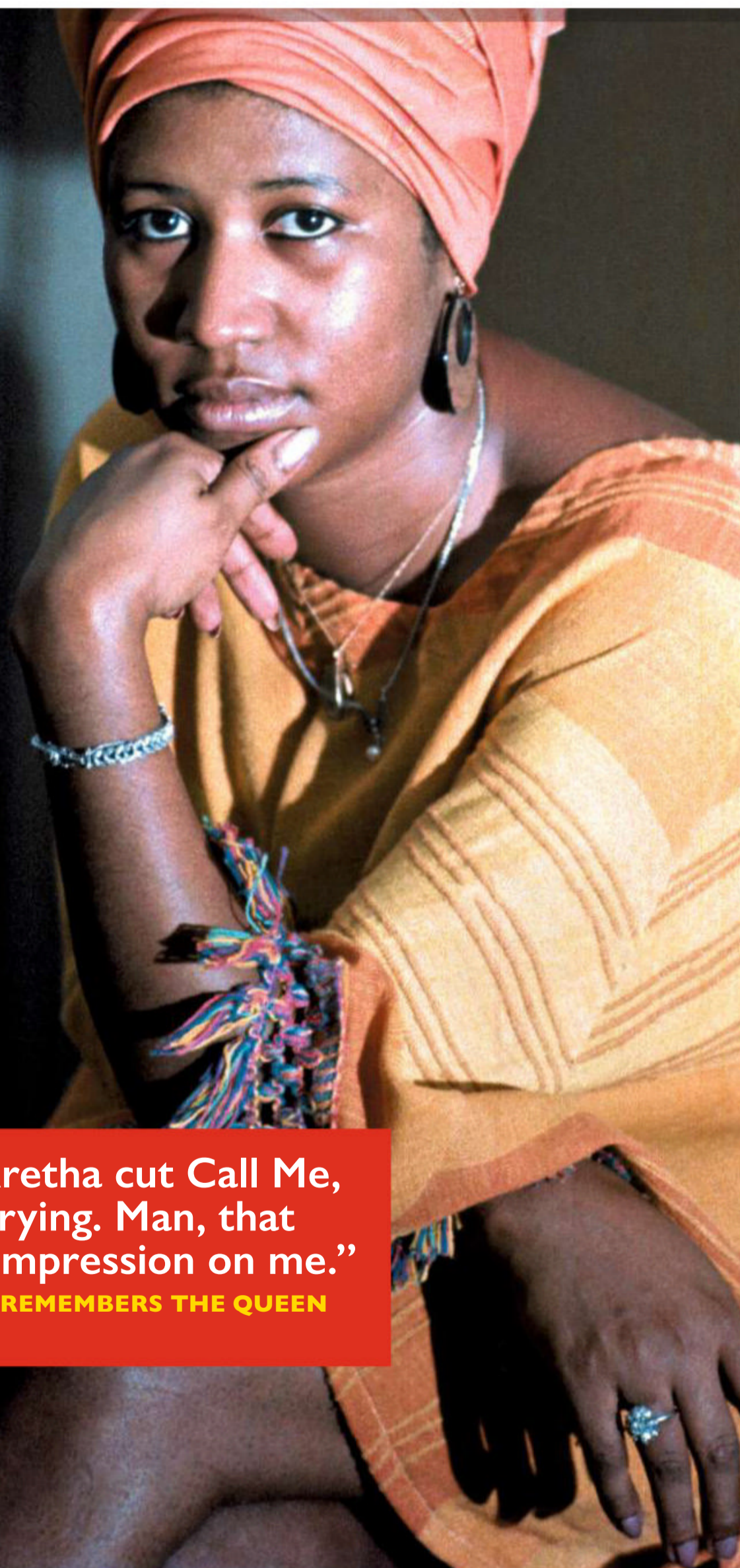
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LONDON ♦ MEMPHIS ♦ MOLINEUX

OCTOBER 2021

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“When Aretha cut *Call Me*, she was crying. Man, that made an impression on me.”

DAVID HOOD REMEMBERS THE QUEEN OF SOUL, P40

FEATURES

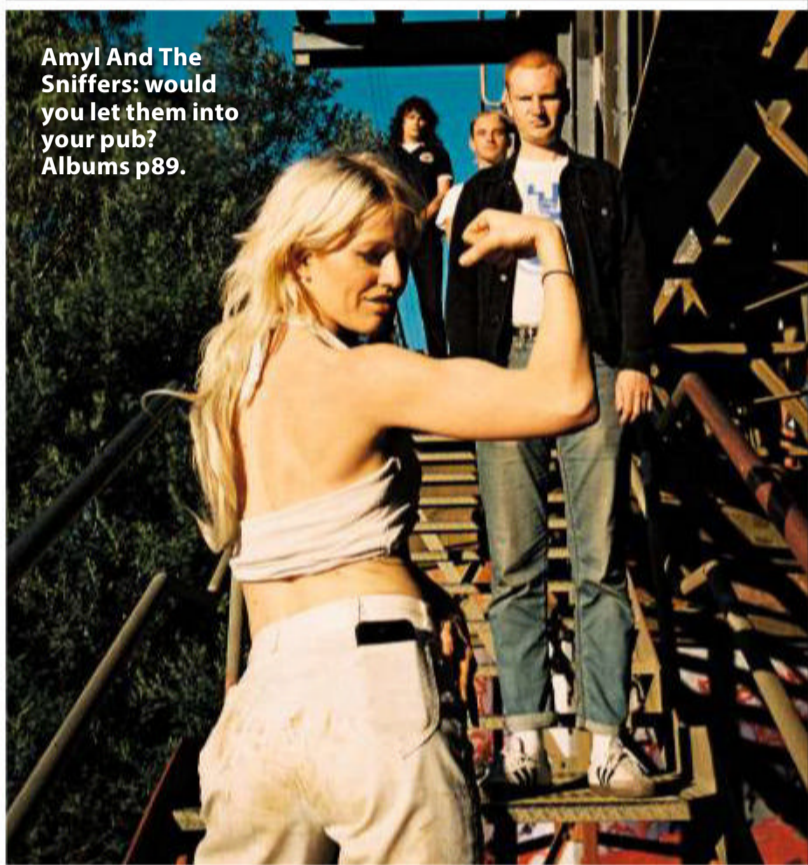
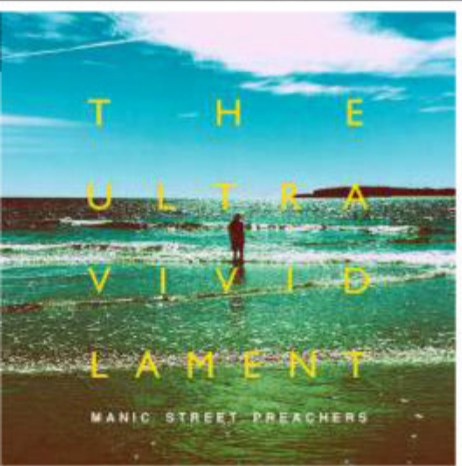
- 34 THE WAR ON DRUGS** Adam Granduciel's graduation from Kurt Vile's *Mate* to arena star brought angst and anxiety. Now he's ready to transcend: "I just want to keep this thing going."
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- 46 LOW** The married Mormon mavens of US alt-rock are making the best music of their lives. It's healing the mind of their troubled male half; can it save the world?
- 52 READING '88** For Britain's defining rock festival to be reborn, first it had to die in a hail of turf and urine-filled projectiles. Eyewitnesses relive the chaos.
- 56 BOB DYLAN** Never mind the reverb! A new *Bootleg Series* box redeems Dylan's 1980s (somewhat). We return to the trenches with his bemused and beleaguered band.
- 64 PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** Achtung! The UK's most singular group have turned the space race and the mining industry into epic pop. Now they map Berlin.
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COVER STORY

- 74 ROBERT PLANT & ALISON KRAUSS** *Raising Sand* changed the game, hoovered Grammys, displaced Led Zeppelin in their singer's priorities. With a sequel due, its protagonists trace their story so far, with a detour via *Led Zep IV*, 50 years on.

Getty

At a branch near you!: expanding the Jack White Third Man empire. What Goes On p14.



Amyl And The Sniffers: would you let them into your pub? Albums p89.



Making a splash: Lindsey Buckingham, Lead Album, p86.

MOJO

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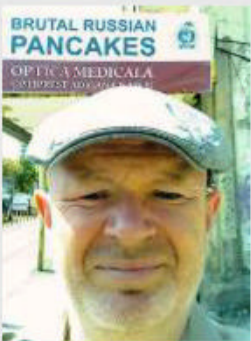
WHAT GOES ON!

- 14 JACK WHITE** His Third Man Records empire has retail outlets in Nashville and Detroit. Now Europe gets in on the act, as a new emporium gets set to open in London's Soho. "Our whole point is to try to turn people on," explains Jack.
- 16 SMALL FACES** Kenney Jones vows to beat the Mod bootleggers by launching his own dedicated reissue label for the Darlings of Wapping Wharf Launderette. What's cooking?
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- 26 BRINSLEY SCHWARZ** He gave his name to the band that pub-rocked the pre-punk '70s, diced with hubris, and asked, What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love And Understanding? Now he's back.

MOJO FILTER

- 86 NEW ALBUMS** Lindsey Buckingham unburdens his heart, plus Amyl And The Sniffers, Sturgill Simpson, Big Red Machine, Saint Etienne, Steve Gunn and more.
- 100 REISSUES** Van Der Graaf Generator unburden the vault, plus Metallica and more.
- 112 BOOKS** Warren Ellis's life of gum, plus Baxter Dury, B.B. King, Jagger (Chris) and more.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



Ian Harrison
In this issue, MOJO's News Editor attempts to fathom the devilish legend of Faust, talks to Jonny Trunk and XTC's Colin Moulding, and digs the new album by The Bug. He can't wait to get out and see some live music again, and draws comics in his spare time.



Andrew Perry
Andrew Perry's first MOJO cover story was 1997's emotional Nirvana oral history. His summit with Robert Plant and Alison Krauss this month was no less soul-stirring, and he particularly thanks the Zep legend for picking up the dinner tab. After ghost-writing for John Lydon and Tricky, his third assisted memoir lands in 2022.



Shawn Brackbill
Shawn is a photographer/director based in Brooklyn and Kansas City. A music lifer, he booked indie shows and tour managed before swapping truck stops for f-stops. His work has appeared in Rolling Stone, Dazed and Vogue as well as MOJO. This month he shoots Adam Granduciel and The War On Drugs from p34.

Olivia Jean, Amy Nash

Rory Gallagher

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TOYOTA GR SUPRA



Sand Blasters

A Raising Sand Companion

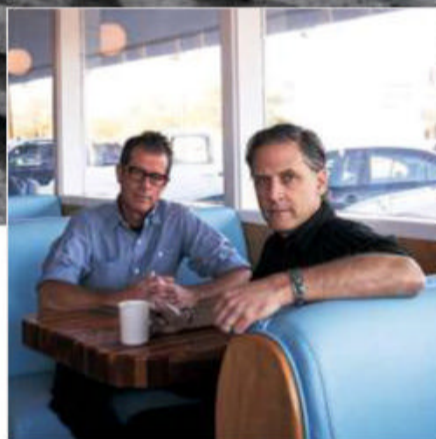
15 songs chosen by Robert Plant | Alison Krauss



1 Robert Plant And Alison Krauss Killing The Blues

To begin, a key track from *Raising Sand* itself. Killing The Blues was brought to Plant & Krauss by producer Burnett, an empathetic collaborator whose sensitivity and knowledge helped fuse their diverse interests. Written in the mid '70s by Chris Isaak's bassist Rowland Salley, among its many versions, John Prine's 1979 take is another keeper.

Written by Rowland Salley. Published by Graph Music (ASCAP). ©&©2007 Rounder Records; www.rounder.com



2 Calexico Sunken Waltz

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT Joey Burns and John Convertino's Quattro is the atmospheric opener to *Raise The Roof*, but here Plant picks the song which precedes it on 2003's fourth Calexico LP, *Feast Of Wire*. A masterpiece of emotional and socio-political drama set in the edgelands between Arizona and Mexico, it's the definitive Calexico album.

Written by Burns, Convertino. Published by Lunada Bay, Good Clean Dirt Admin By Bug Music ©2000 Quarterstick Records ©2000 City Slang From *Hot Rail* (City Slang Records) cityslang.com



3 Bobby Parker Steal Your Heart Away

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT Plant once claimed that Blues Get Off My Shoulder, the 1957 debut by R&B guitarist Bobby Parker, inspired him to start singing, and the riff of Led Zeppelin's *Moby Dick* is not dissimilar to Parker's 1961 classic Watch Your Step. Steal Your Heart Away is Watch Your Step's flipside – and was attempted, rumours persist, by Led Zep for possible inclusion on their 1969 debut.

Written by B Parker. Caldwell Music



4 Lefty Frizzell I Want To Be With You Always

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS Alison Krauss' first *Sand Blasters* selection is a country chestnut from 1951, courtesy of William 'Lefty' Frizzell. I Want To Be With You Always was his third Number 1 country hit, confirming him as a singer with almost as much honky-tonk star power as Hank Williams. Another song that was covered – with characteristic idiosyncrasy – by John Prine.

Written by Frizzell, Beck. Copyright Control



9 Ralph Stanley I'm Willing To Try

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS Another gem unearthed by Alison Krauss, from the bluegrass trailblazer who appeared with her on the groundbreaking soundtrack to the Coen Brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* I'm Willing To Try is a powerful a cappella call and response with Stanley's regular band The Clinch Mountain Boys, from a 1983 gospel set, *Child Of The King*.

Written by Bob Fleming. Public Domain ©&©1983 Ralph Stanley. From *Child Of The King* (Rebel Records); www.rebelrecords.com



10 Otto Virgial Little Girl In Rome

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT A mystery even in the blues' mythical terrain, Otto Virgial (or Virgil) recorded four tracks – on two 78s – in Chicago, in 1935. "The stuff Robert's introduced me to," says Krauss, "are often the blues versions of things I knew from growing up on the bluegrass side – the same stories of droughts and natural disasters of the dustbowl... Mine came from Jimmy Rogers, his came from Robert Johnson."

Written by O Virgial. Copyright Control



11 The Louvin Brothers Alabama

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS Hellraising, God-fearing country legends, Charlie and Ira Louvin recorded this paean to their home state for their second LP, 1956's *Tragic Songs Of Life*. Their vocal blend was a model for Krauss and Plant. "We'd cross parts a lot, like the original Louvin Brothers," says Krauss, "where there'd be no fixed tenor or baritone singer, and both parts are in the melody."

Written by I Louvin, C Hill, C Louvin. Universal MCA Music Ltd



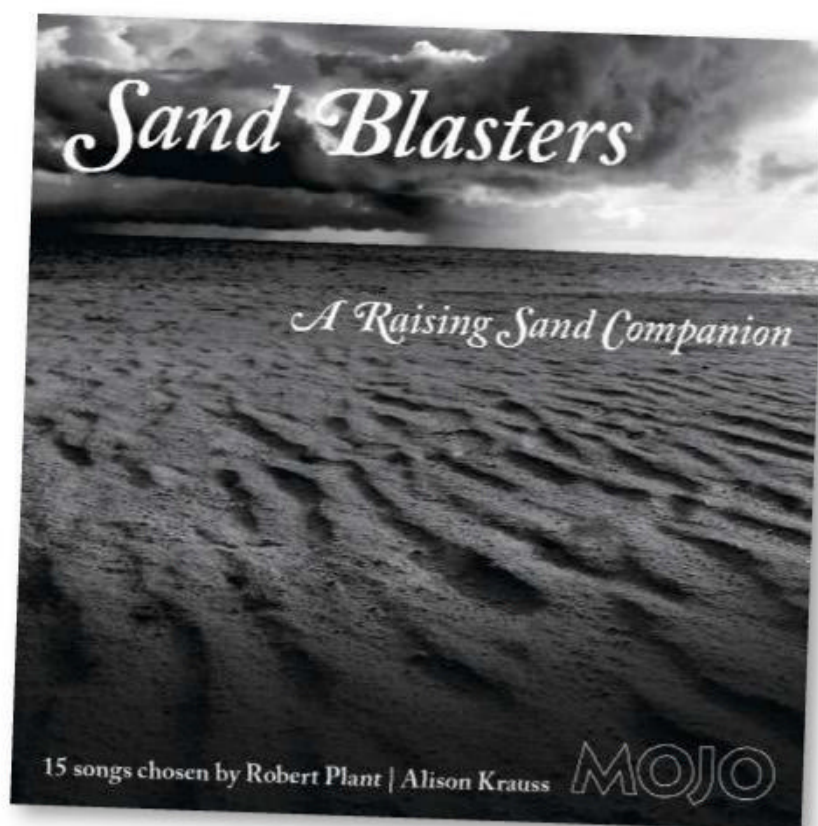
12 Dock Boggs Bright Sunny South

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS A Civil War-era song covered by Krauss and her band Union Station on 2001's *New Favorite*, where she focused on fiddle-playing rather than singing. This starker, more mournful version comes from Appalachian legend Dock Boggs, accompanied only by his banjo and recorded in 1964, after Mike Seeger had rediscovered Boggs in Virginia in time for the folk revival.

From *Dock Boggs* (FW02351) Courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. ©&©1964. Used by permission.

WHEN ROBERT PLANT AND ALISON KRAUSS CAME together to release *Raising Sand* in 2007, the album proved spectacularly effective at uniting disparate worlds. Hardened rock fans were introduced to a singer described by producer T Bone Burnett as “the Aretha Franklin of bluegrass”. Country aficionados discovered the rootsy nuances that had always lurked in the depths of Led Zeppelin’s Golden God. *Raising Sand* proved just as useful at drawing out the affinities between the varied musics Plant and Krauss loved: the laments of old Albion and weird rural America; the blues and R&B and multitudinous different manifestations of folk; the contemporary bands who tuned in to these haunting traditions.

Now, as the duo reunite for a second set of diverse covers, *Raise The Roof*, we’ve commissioned them to pick a selection of personal favourites for this very special MOJO CD. “That’s the great thing about me and Alison,” Plant tells us, “we’re ably supported by a world of beautiful music that one or other of us doesn’t know too much about.” *Sand Blasters* is where they – and, fortunately, us too – can learn more...



5 The Everly Brothers I Wonder If I Care As Much

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS The Everlys have featured on both *Raising Sand* and *Raise The Roof*; on the latter, The Price Of Love is tackled. According to T Bone Burnett, Krauss said of it, “That’s a great song, let’s just strip it down to nothing and see how dark we can make it.” Here, she picks a mournful Don Everly tune from the duo’s 1958 debut.

Written by P Everly, D Everly. Acuff-Rose



6 Bert Jansch Poison

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT If Plant’s love of British folk was implied on *Raising Sand*, it comes to the surface on *Raise The Roof* with a cover of the masterful Jansch’s It Don’t Bother Me. For *Sand Blasters*, Plant has plucked this ominous folk-rock groove from 1969’s *Birthday Blues*.

Poison (2015 Remaster). Written by Bert Jansch. Leola Music Ltd. / Bucks Music Group Ltd. Produced by Shel Talmy. ©2015 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. Licensed courtesy of BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd



7 Low Everybody’s Song

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT Among 21st century LPs, Robert Plant is clearly pretty obsessed with Low’s 2005 effort, *The Great Destroyer*: he covered two tracks on 2010’s *Band Of Joy*, and here includes a third, Everybody’s Song. With their 13th studio album imminent, meet the Duluth band in this issue on page 46.

Written by Sparhawk, Parker, Micheletti. Published by 1238 Music (BMI) adm. Domino Publishing ©&©2005 Chair Kicker’s Union. From *The Great Destroyer*.



8 Ola Belle Reed My Epitaph

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS There’s a song by the Appalachian folk matriarch on *Raise The Roof*, the unflinching murder ballad You Led Me To The Wrong. Here, though, Alison Krauss chooses the title track of Reed’s autobiographical 1976 LP, a musical documentary of life in the North Carolina mountains. She died in 2002, aged 85.

Written by Ola Belle Reed. Happy Valley Music BMI (care of Bike Music) ©&©1973 Rounder Records; www.rounder.com



13 Sam Amidon As I Roved Out

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT With neat serendipity, Plant chose this Sam Amidon take on a trad song to complement Krauss’s Dock Boggs pick: As I Roved Out is from Amidon’s 2013 LP, *Bright Sunny South*. Among the inventive folk artist’s band is Shahzad Ismaily, last seen playing accordion in Bob Dylan’s masked band in the *Shadow Kingdom* film.

Traditional, arranged by Sam Amidon, Published by Sam Amidon. Produced by Jerry Boys. From *Bright Sunny South* ©&©2013 Nonesuch Records Inc



14 The Tony Rice Unit Midnight On The Stormy Deep

CHOSEN BY ALISON KRAUSS The young Alison Krauss spent a year or so playing live with Tony Rice in the late ‘80s, doubtless having a stab at this traditional from time to time. Rice, who died on Christmas Day 2020, was a fine bluegrass guitarist, also influenced by Byrd Clarence White as he was growing up in LA.

Written by Watson. Published by Hillgreen Music BMI (care of Downtown DMP Songs) ©&©1987 Rounder Records; www.rounder.com



15 Henry Spaulding Cairo Blues

CHOSEN BY ROBERT PLANT Otto Virgial recorded four songs we know of; Geeshie Wiley, whose Last Kind Words graces *Raise The Roof*, managed six. Plant’s unquenchable taste for elusive blues musicians closes our comp: one of two tracks in existence by country blues enigma Henry Spaulding, recorded in Chicago in 1929. Blues lore suggests Spaulding died shortly after *Cairo Blues* and its flip, *Biddle Street Blues*, were cut.

Written by Spaulding. Copyright Control

“IT’S SHIT OR BUST... IT CAN GET A LITTLE STICKY.”
ROBERT PLANT ON
LED ZEP IV
Begins
Page 80

VILLAGERS

FEVER DREAMS

THE NEW ALBUM
OUT 20TH AUGUST





Toyah and Robert Fripp

HIS AND HERS

What music are you currently grooving to?

Toyah: *Pink Noise* by Laura Mvula. I've been a massive fan since seeing Laura at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival about six years ago.

Robert: Jón Leifs, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Peteris Vasks and Giya Kancheli as composers, and Hilary Hahn as player.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

T: Roxy Music, *For Your Pleasure*.

R: *Wildflowers* by Judy Collins.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

T: T.Rex, *Electric Warrior*, Vicarage Road Records, Kings Heath, Birmingham. It cost about 12s/6d. I still have it.

R: My sister Patricia and me bought two 78s for our shared birthdays, April 1957, at Poole Music Stores, Wimborne: Elvis Presley's Hound Dog and Tommy Steele's Singing The Blues.

Which musician, other than your-

self, have you ever wanted to be?

T: Tim Buckley, Carly Simon, Joni Mitchell, Bowie, Janis Joplin, Mick Jagger, Keith Moon, Jimi Hendrix, Michael Stipe, Eddie Vedder...

R: It never occurred to me to be anyone else.

What do you sing in the shower?

T: My new repertoire.

R: I don't sing in the shower.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

T: Motown, Tina Turner or Elvis Presley. I need to dance.

R: I don't play records Saturday night.

And your Sunday morning record?

T: Sibelius, Suite For Violin And Strings.

R: English pastorales: Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi. Then a Hilary Hahn selection beginning with The Lark Ascending, on to Bernstein's Agathon, [and finally] violin concerti.

Toyah's Posh Pop (Demon) is out August 27. Her Posh Pop tour begins in September.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Naomi Yang

DREAM POP, FOLK, ELSEWHERE

What music are you currently grooving to?

Some beautiful albums from the late '70s by Michael Rother, *Flammende Herzen*, *Sterntaler* and *Katzenmusik*. Damon [Krukowski] found them in a flea market in Berlin. These records were an inspiration – we asked ourselves, could we make a record that sounded as if Sky Records had put it out? I've also been listening to *Kankyō Ongaku*, a compilation of Japanese ambient music, 1980-1990.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I can always listen to Sandy Denny. I'd chose Fairport Convention's *Liege & Lief* as a perfect album.

What was the first record you

ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Moonshot by Buffy Sainte-Marie. Probably at Sam Goody's in New York City. I was in 4th grade, nine years old, and my homeroom teacher played it for us. I was astonished by the way she sang, and I loved the photo of her.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

In my next life I would hope to come back as Bootsie Collins – a bass player that makes people get up and dance!

What do you sing in the shower?

I only ever sing in the shower before a show, so it's usually one of our songs as a warm-up.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

The best thing to do is have dinner – with friends! – in our garden and listen to WJIB on the AM radio. WJIB is an eccentric hyper-local station, they play 'Beautiful Music,' which is an old American radio programming format, but I think actually means anything that the owner and sole DJ Bob Bittner finds beautiful. Cross-genre, cross-decades. Sometimes startling, but music you might never hear, might never have heard, or might have completely forgotten about...

And your Sunday morning record?

I adore Baden Powell's *Solitude On Guitar* – especially the track *Marcia Eu Te Amo* with Eberhard Weber's bass playing.

Damon & Naomi With Kurihara's A Sky Record is out now on 20-20-20.



Cameron Lewis

Matthew E White

COSMIC SOUTHERN SOUL

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm listening to Madlib's *Sound Ancestors*, all the time. I think he has taken his craft to a special level in terms of musicality and music history. I just try to listen carefully to anything he does. *Road Of The Lonely Ones* is pretty good, but they're all good. I think it's awesome how they put it together.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*. It's maybe the best example of both an individual sonic and lyrical statement, but also the community's sound. I think records like that are truly rare. It is a perfect storm. A culmination of a lot of cultural and community growth. For me that's about as good as it gets.

What is the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I think it was Pearl Jam's *Ten* and I bought it at a Tower Records in Tokyo. My family was living in Tokyo for a while. I used to go to Tower



Records pretty much every weekend. There was a music store on top of it. I would sit there and play drums, and go to Tower Records.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Stevie Wonder probably. If I could just be anybody.

What do you sing in the shower?

A lot of the time I sing my own tunes to figure out if the melody works by itself and not just like with chords, or something.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Probably Kendrick Lamar's *Good Kid M.A.A.D City*. We play that record almost all the time, when we play a show, backstage.

And your Sunday morning record?

Jorge Ben's *A Tábu de Esmeralda*. It's really intelligent, but also has so much style to it. When I think about cruising around on a Sunday, going to the beach, I feel like that's pretty good accompaniment.

Matthew E White's K Bay is out in September on Domino.

“Madlib has taken his craft to a special level.”

MATTHEW E WHITE

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UNLESS YOU SUPPORT WOLVERHAMPTON

Wanderers, you might not feel you've much in common with Robert Plant, a rock icon from a time when we expected our heroes to be anything but relatable. But what's immediately apparent from our interview with Plant this month is he's very like a typical MOJO reader: insatiably curious about music; enthusiastic about sharing his latest discoveries; honest enough to understand that while he knows and loves a lot, there's always something else worth hearing.

MOJO joins Plant in the corner of a 15th century country pub, blasting North African electronica out of his phone. Later, he will talk candidly about how working with Alison Krauss revealed to him an enriching strain of American music that, in spite of his restless spirit of enquiry, he'd never previously explored. "I knew nothing about The Louvin Brothers," he admits.

Maybe you already know the Louvins well, and are schooled in some of the other musical worlds we explore this issue. The esoteric frenzies of Faust and Van Der Graaf Generator, say, or the devastating quietude of Low. Even the gems hiding in plain sight in Dylan's much-maligned '80s catalogue. But this, in a way, is our mission: to find fresh stories and perspectives on the music that changed your life, and to point you towards a dozen new potential obsessions that might, in some small way, change it again.

Happy hunting!



JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

My old friend, this will be a night to remember

The feature on Family [MOJO 333] took me back to my first Woodstock-style experience – the snappily titled Nottingham Festival of Blues and Progressive Music, from 12 noon to 10pm on a sunny afternoon in July 1970. As an impressionable 15-year-old, I saw Atomic Rooster, bopped along in the sunshine to In The Summertime from Mungo Jerry, and started a lifelong love affair with all things Stratocaster after seeing the mighty Rory Gallagher and Taste. But it was Family who left their mark. Roger Chapman, clearly adequately refreshed, was spellbinding – a whirling dervish of flailing arms, mikestands and smashed tambourines, like a hippy Ian Curtis. That day Family joined Free and the Fabs in Day-Glo letters on my school jotter as my bands of choice.

Crowded House were also memorable, maybe for not dissimilar reasons to the anarchic Chapman. I saw them in 1991 and by that time was married with children. When concerts were getting increasingly sanitised, corporate and safe, Neil Finn and his cohorts just put on a chaotically brilliant show. They managed to transform the concert hall to a small intimate club. They tried out half-written new songs, took requests, played covers,

chatted and engaged with the audience, organised sing-alongs – all this underpinned by those great swooping Neil Finn pop standards. They were also hilariously funny, particularly the sadly missed Paul Hester. It was a great night out just for the anarchy and sheer abandonment of it all – not words you'd automatically associate with Crowded House.

Garry Perkins, Lambley, Notts

... I was particularly interested in your pieces on Crowded House and Family. Personally, I feel that the best albums that Neil and Tim have been involved with are the orchestral/Split Enz album *Enzso* (1996) and *Everyone Is Here* (2004) by The Finn Brothers. Shortly after the latter's release, my wife and I encountered Neil standing on the crest of a bridge in Venice – we resisted the temptation to gush about it to him because he was clearly so absorbed by taking in the splendour of the scene. I saw Crowded House at Leicester's De Montfort Hall and, looking back, it's amazing that Paul Hester lasted as long as he did, because at one point, he decided to trot along the balcony rail balancing like a tightrope walker. I was also at a memorable gig by Split Enz at Leicester Poly where a few years earlier, I'd seen Family's last-ever show. These concerts rank amongst the best I've ever attended. Incidentally, I

also saw the pre-Chappo Farinas at a local youth club around '65 for a shilling at the door.

Ian Roberts, Leicester

Much that once was, is lost

I had noticed that Fred Dellar's by-line had disappeared from the Ask... feature some months ago, so very sad to hear that he's no longer with us [MOJO 333]. Like everyone else, I've greatly enjoyed the page, and it's good to see it continuing – a worthy tribute. Fred was very kind with the couple of queries I posited, and apologetic when stumped by them. I'm going to resubmit them to the new team, as I'd still like to know the answers, and I'm sure if Fred's looking in from somewhere in the great beyond he'll be interested in the answers too.

Rob Kirby, Hitchin

May it be your light in the darkness, when all other lights go out

Great article on The Hollies [MOJO 334] – and long overdue. I only recently discovered their 1966 album *For Certain Because...*, which for me deserves to be up there in the best pop albums of the '60s. The Hollies were starting to stretch out and take risks, undoubtedly swept up in the quest for new sounds and new approaches to pop. Graham Nash has to be credited with pushing The Hollies out of their comfort zone, but I'm sure all the band were involved in trying to keep up with the rapid changes in pop at the time. Their first psychedelic album, *Evolution*, is an interesting period piece, but apart from a few tracks, it's a bit of a folly. They never really suited that marmalade skies and elephant's eyes phase in music. The album *Butterfly*, which again has some good tracks, only confirms that The Hollies were right to abandon this direction. Finally, can I just say that Allan Clarke is a great singer; underrated and very versatile. He could sing anything convincingly.

Wilfred Appleseed, via e-mail

...Thank you for a great article on The Hollies in MOJO 334. A fabulous group who perhaps don't always get the plaudits they deserve. They recorded a wonderful song Wings, just before Graham left, which was included on the charity LP *No One's Gonna Change Our World*.

Sean Connolly, via e-mail

What is this new devilry?

Revisionism runs rampant! I'm sorry, I just don't buy his son's claim that George Harrison didn't like reverb [MOJO 333]. In 1970, at any rate. After *Wonderwall* and *Electric Sounds*, *All Things Must Pass* was George's first solo effort. He was photographed smiling with Spector with the tape of the album. Unsurprisingly, the latter's production is outstanding. When I bought it on its release, I thought it a flawed masterpiece. The flaw? That awful cacophony of a

third disc. Apple Jams – an aural nightmare, wholly unnecessary. George could have made fundamental revisions – he had plenty of time and his own studio – in 2001, on its re-release. He only did it for My Sweet Lord. And which was the better? Spector's original production of My Sweet Lord – no question.

Michael Solan, Chester Le Street

You need people of intelligence on this sort of mission... quest... thing

Regarding the movie quotes in MOJO 333 (Theories, Rants, Etc.), I believe they are from Quantum Of Solace, the second Daniel Craig 007 adventure. Good choice as it ties in nicely with cover star Amy Winehouse, who recorded a demo track for the film with Mark Ronson. Congrats on another fine issue. Keep 'em coming.

Mohammad Rahman, Uxbridge

It is a strange fate that we should suffer so much fear and doubt over so small a thing

Would you agree that it's time for a reappraisal of Mike Nesmith's 1968 masterpiece, *The Wichita Train Whistle Sings*? I first heard this terrific concept album after my father brought a copy back from the States in that year and it's fascinated and delighted me ever since. It never really troubled the Billboard scorers at the time (not even reaching the Top 100) where, perhaps, the listening public weren't quite ready yet for 'serious' music from a Monkee! We're now 50-plus years on from that and, I would politely suggest, high time for a re-evaluation of Nesmith's (ably assisted by 'The Wrecking Crew') meisterwerk.

Peter Bowler, Loughton

Not the beard!

I'd like to raise my 10-gallon hat and say a massive thank you to David Fricke for his outstanding interview with Billy F Gibbons [MOJO 333]. The experiences provided by Billy's musical director dad and sitting in on a session with BB King were no doubt profound moments that would shape the future he would take, though I would suggest that the greatest impact was provided quite simply by his family's housekeeper, Stella Matthews. I have no doubt that the education provided by Stella and Billy's discovery of grassroots blues artists in venues such as Houston's Fourth Ward cemented his destiny. It was also fantastic to read how even after 50 years Billy maintains the love of writing songs, and how this has resulted in his incredible solo record *Hardware*. It's interesting that whilst this record deviates from Billy's blues focus to a more surf-rock vibe, he has clearly been keen to maintain a close connection to ZZ Top through the album's Ford Coupe *Eliminator*-style artwork.

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Printing: William Gibbons
MOJO (ISSN 1351-0193; USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing Ltd, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA, United Kingdom. H Bauer Publishing is a company registered in England and Wales with company number LP003328, registered address Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT. VAT no 918 5617 01.
The US annual subscription price is \$114.98. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.
Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US Postmaster: Send address changes to MOJO, World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.
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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO



You gotta serve somebody: Jack White prepares to welcome UK customers into his new Third Man boutique; (insets) the store's frontage and 'disguise'.

Open For White Goods

Third Man Records opens a London branch! **Jack White** talks beatnik culture, vinyl recording booths and a live launch.

NUMBER ONE Marshall Street, located off London's traditionally swinging Carnaby Street, was apparently gripped by identity crises during its recent refit, a different business blazoned across the frontage every couple of weeks: Absurd Scam Records, Harry Lime's Penicillin, Jack Sharp's Upholstery Tacks...

Each one, however, slyly pointed to the enterprise's true nature: the London branch of Third Man Records, the label – and later shop – founded by Jack White in 2001. “We could have just put up black wood,” laughs White, “but people who'd maybe walk past on their way to work wondering what the heck was going on, that was interesting to us.”

Opening in September, it is Third Man's third commercial outpost after Nashville and Detroit, and it arrives with a strong identity “very much in the design world of Third Man Records,” explains trained upholsterer White, whose new website Jack White Art And Design further emphasises his hands-on creative approach (highlights include the refurbishment of a Sam Phillips Recording Studio couch and a bowling alley).

The “easy thing” to do, he tells MOJO, would be “curate and sell things we are interested in – a Criterion collection kind of thing. But Third Man has only ever sold the things we produce and we're part of. You're coming into our world when you walk into it. But it's inviting – there's not a hipster snobbery to it all. Our whole point is to try to turn people onto something they don't know about.”

Long before “people were trying to make Instagram-friendly backgrounds”, White believed in the 360-degree experience. “I like the idea of being able to at least buy bubblegum from a vending machine. There has to be something I can do with my hands.” He lists some of the store's interactive highlights: a fully functional vinyl recording booth; a “cool phone booth” created by Teenage Engineering where music can be made; a small basement club (“on the stage, you'll be able to go and play through all the Third Man effects pedals and synthesizers.”) It's here where White hopes to perform at the launch – “hopefully we can also stream that performance out.” There's also plans to collaborate with pandemic-hit Soho venues “now we're coming into their house”.

Originally White's “own world”, the Third Man concept has evolved after 750 releases. “The less and less it has to do with me and the more and more it has to do with this hive of creative people and other bands, the happier I am,” says White. Yet as always with White, it retains a distinctive edge. He was drawn to Soho's musical heritage – “beatnik culture, the Marquee club” – but mention Apple Records HQ, once a few minutes away at 3 Savile Row, and he sets out his own stall.

“In the first couple of years of Third Man, my favourite thing was people would come in and somebody would say, ‘Oh, this is like Sun Records’” he says. “Then the next person would come in and say, ‘Oh this is like The Beatles’ Apple Records.’ Then somebody would come in and say, ‘Oh, this is like Prince's Paisley Park.’ And eventually people stopped saying that, and it was like, ‘Oh – this is Third Man Records.’”

Victoria Segal

Third Man Records' London HQ opens on September 25. See also jackwhiteartanddesign.com

Olivia Jean

“You're coming into our world... there's not a hipster snobbery to it...”

JACK WHITE



WHAT GOES ON



Nice work: peak Small Faces (from left) Ronnie Lane, Kenney Jones, Steve Marriott, Ian McLagan; (right) ace Faces (from left) Ronnie Wood, Jones, Rod Stewart; (below) the new *Live – 1966* sleeve art.



past. As for the ‘use it or lose it’ rule – I consider it to be theft. People saying we can put records of your material out whether you like it or not – bollocks, you can’t!

“It’s in our interest to try and look after our own catalogue now,” he adds, referring to the sharp practices suffered by many groups in the ’60s. “If people want to waste their money on inferior product [bootlegs], then that is down to them. All of our records will be quality items, the

absolute best we can make them. We’ve got some great stuff planned, stuff by other artists with a similar mindset. That’s why I love the name Nice Records. It’s nice to listen to nice things.”

And MOJO must ask: can Jones comment on Ronnie Wood’s announcement to The Times that the Faces are recording their first album since 1973? (“Me, Rod [Stewart], and Kenney have been recording some new Faces music,” said Ronnie). “We’ve been trying to celebrate our 50th anniversary these past few years,” Kenney says, enigmatically. “We’re already a few years behind now thanks to the pandemic!”

Ian Harrison

Small Faces – Live 1966 is available on CD from September 3, and a limited coloured vinyl edition will follow in November. For more info see www.thesmallfaces.com

KENNEY JONES LAUNCHES NICE RECORDS WITH A SMALL FACES ’66 LIVE LP! (AND A FACES REUNION?)

“THERE ARE absolutely no flowery overdubs,” declares Small Faces drummer Kenney Jones. “What you hear is exactly how it was, exactly as we performed the show... for me, it’s like going back in time listening to this record.”

He’s talking about *Small Faces – Live 1966*, a remastered, restored and official issue of the earliest known recorded gig by his first group. The two good and screamy sets at the Twenty Club in Mouscron, Belgium were taped by the venue, without the band’s knowledge, on January 9, 1966. At a time when the group were being worked hard by manager Don Arden, they’re on fiery form, with bassist Ronnie Lane singing R&B standby Ooh Poo Pah Doo, a medley of Booker T’s Plum Nellie, Baby Please Don’t Go and Parchman Farm, and, uncannily predating Led Zeppelin’s Whole Lotta Love, vocalist/ guitarist Steve Marriott and Lane’s You Need Loving. “This gig is really what the Small Faces were all about,” says Kenney. “We absolutely loved playing together.”

It’s the first release on Jones’s new label, Nice Records, which promises further Small Faces releases culled from his attic archive and elsewhere, plus other associated acts. “I made sure I got a copy of whatever I recorded at the end of each session, whether that be a back-up tape, a finished or unfinished mix,” says Jones. “I got a lot of tapes. [Small Faces archivist and Nice Records collaborator] Rob Caiger was pretty surprised when he saw exactly what I had tucked away.”

Another reason, he says, is the EU law on copyright, a “use it or lose it” proposition involving a 50-year rule which arguably emboldens bootleggers. “For once, everybody around this label is doing it for the right reasons,” he says. “I’m pleased that the royalties will be handled in the correct way – they haven’t been in the

“It’s like going back in time listening to this record.”

KENNEY JONES



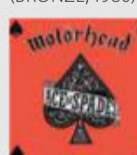
GIMME FIVE... GAMBLING SONGS

The Pioneers Long Shot Kick The Bucket



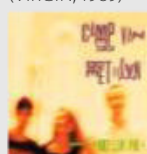
(TROJAN, 1969) A bet on at the gee-gees and the horse only goes and dies before the finish line? Ouch! Spookily, this racing-minded Kingston trio also recorded Poor Rameses about a horse who, bizarrely, expired the same day in 1969 as Long Shot.

Motörhead Ace Of Spades



(BRONZE, 1980) Where indifferent-about-winning Lemmy piles on all the card-playing clichés atop a bathtub crank metal-thrash the whole family can enjoy. See also Dean Martin’s Five Card Stud, Clara Morris’ Poker Playing Daddy and Laurie Johnson’s Stick Or Twist.

Camper Van Beethoven When I Win The Lottery



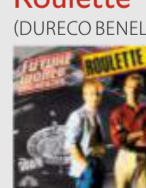
(VIRGIN, 1989) On their last record before jacking it in, the California college rockers tell a cautionary tale of a born loser, redneck America and free cash. More lucky numbers on Free Money by Patti Smith and Nilsson’s The Lottery Song.

Howard Tate One Armed Bandit



(TBF, 1986) The ’60s R&B hitmaker turns on the drum machine and gets excited about going to Atlantic City and playing the slots. Tenpole Tudor’s Three Bells In A Row, and, of course, Elvis’s Viva Las Vegas also big up spending all your cash on the noble fruit machine.

Future World Orchestra Roulette



(DURECO BENELUX, 1983) The Dutch Tour de France soundtrackers get JM Jarre-y thinking about placed bets and spinning wheels. Also in the casino zone are Kraftwerk, whose Elektrisches Roulette is played by long-haired showroom dummies.



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Taking her time:
Courtney Barnett,
creating an energy.



“I’m constantly baffled by song-writing and recording...”

COURTNEY BARNETT

Kurt Vile, 2017’s *Lotta Sea Lice*. “Since then, I’ve really wanted to work with Stella on something,” Barnett says. “When I started work on the new record, I was sending her new demos and getting her opinion on prospective producers and mixers. And then I realised that really I just wanted to work with her.”

Saluting Mozgawa as “an amazing musician”, Barnett recalls, “we spent the sessions swapping instruments, and sharing records that we liked. I discovered a lot of new influences working with her, like Kraftwerk, Sly & The Family Stone and Arthur Russell. I’d never even heard of Arthur Russell before.”

These new influences can be heard in *Things Take Time*, *Take Time*’s loose approach and fondness for drum machines. “I write with drum machines at home – they’re great for knocking up quick demos in 20 minutes,” Barnett says. “This time, I wanted to keep them on the songs, rather than editing them out. A lot of these new songs are quite calm, and the drum machines helped create this repetitive, meditative energy.”

Australia’s strict response to the pandemic kicked in after Barnett began work on the new album in late 2019, and she found herself “locked down in a flat in Melbourne by myself, writing all the time because I didn’t know what else to do.” Lockdown also limited her choice of studio, though Sydney’s Golden Retriever quickly proved a godsend. “It had a really big live room, lots of beautiful analogue gear, and lots of instruments, which was great as I’d only brought my guitar with me.”

Over two five-day stints at Golden Retriever in early 2021, Barnett and Mozgawa juggled instruments, pulling Barnett’s new songs apart and reassembling them in new forms ‘til late in the night, “experimenting until they felt right. I’m constantly baffled by the songwriting and recording process – and I think that’s good! To be constantly unsure, to be always learning and second-guessing... I’ve come to trust in that process of hitting a wall and experiencing feelings of failure, because I know now it’ll result in this gut feeling that I’ve found the right vision. It’s a beautiful satisfaction. Also, it’s a lot of fun.”

Stevie Chick

FACT SHEET

Title: *Things Take Time, Take Time*
Due: November 12
Songs: Rae Street, Sunfair Sundown, Turning Green, Before You Gotta Go
The Buzz: “We were brainstorming in the studio, turning songs upside down and inside out, rejecting anything that sounded too much like stuff I’d done before. It was a great, great process.”

COURTNEY BARNETT EMBRACES THE DRUM MACHINE, DISCOVERS ARTHUR RUSSELL ON LP 3

COURTNEY BARNETT’s new album, says promotional materials, marks the debut of “Courtney 2.0”. The Sydney singer-songwriter gives a characteristically wry chuckle. “Um, that’s not how I’d put it,” she says. “I think that was someone else from ‘Team Courtney.’ *Things Take Time, Take Time* is just an extension of the same thing I’ve always been doing.”

Yet Barnett’s third full-length solo LP rings some changes nevertheless. The musicians who backed her on her acclaimed first two albums are absent this time around. Standard guitar/bass/drums paradigm upended, Barnett divided instrumental duties between herself and the album’s producer, Warpaint drummer Stella Mozgawa, who first worked with Barnett on her collaborative album with

ALSO WORKING

...in November, **JOAN AS POLICE WOMAN** releases *The Solution Is Restless*, a collaborative album with the late **Tony Allen** and **Dave Okumu** of The Invisible. She was introduced to Allen in Paris in 2019 by **Damon Albarn** (right). “We hit it off,” she says, “and decided to record together... we improvised all night. When the world



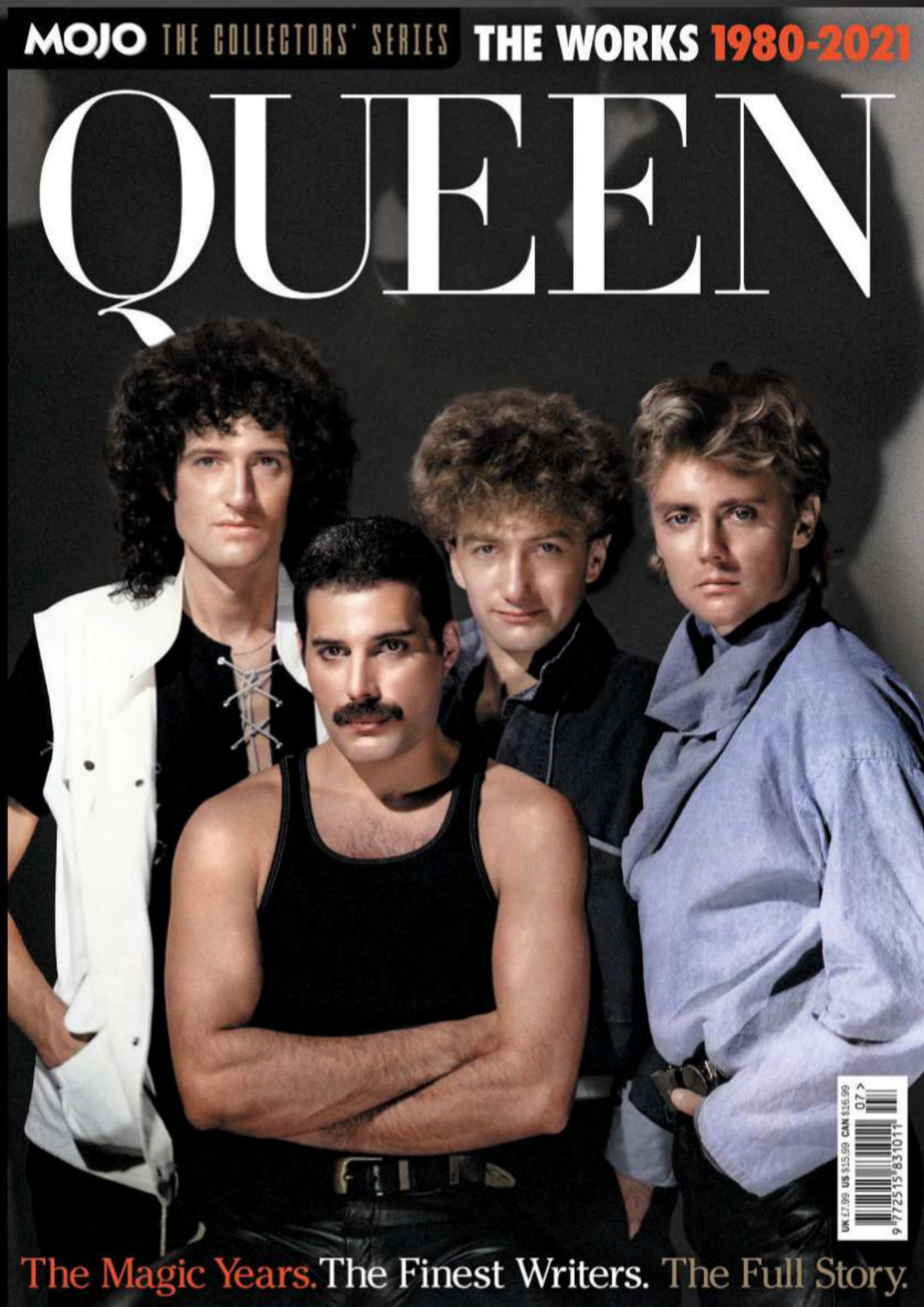
shut down, I used those recordings to write a record”... **DAMON ALBARN**’s own solo set *The Nearer The Fountain, More Pure The Stream Flows* arrives in November. Started as an Iceland-inspired orchestral work and developed over lockdown, it “documents the emotional ebb and flow of the human condition”... **JETHRO TULL**’s *The Zealot Gene*, the group’s first album since 2003, will be released

early next year... **MICHAEL ROTHER**, **BLONDIE** and **BITCHIN BAJAS** are also recording new music... ex-**5TH DIMENSION** voices (and stars of the Summer Of Soul movie) **Marilyn McCoo** and **Billy Davis Jr** are working on an expanded version of their recent Lennon & McCartney covers set, *Blackbird*... **YES** release *The Quest*, their first LP since 2014 and the death of Chris Squire, in October. With sleeve art by



Roger Dean, guitarist **Steve Howe** calls it, “a well-refined set of songs that capture the band’s true potential”... **BILLY BRAGG**’s (left) *The Million Things That Never Happened* is due in October. Billed as a “pandemic blues album”, it was produced by Magic Numbers’ **Romeo Stodart** and **Dave Izumi**: songs include *Freedom Doesn’t Come For Free* and *The Buck Doesn’t Stop Here No More*...

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The First Lady of Rockabilly: Wanda Jackson, plotting her next route.



WANDA VISIONS
Jackson's Five Faves

- 1 Joan Jett** *You Drive Me Wild* (FROM GREATEST HITS, BLACKHEART, 2010)
- 2 Ray Charles** *Worried Mind* (FROM MODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY & WESTERN MUSIC, ABC-PARAMOUNT, 1962)
- 3 Wanda Jackson** *Right Or Wrong* (SINGLE, CAPITOL, 1961)
- 4 Hank Thompson** *The Wild Side Of Life* (SINGLE, CAPITOL, 1952)
- 5 How Great Thou Art** (HYMN, 1886)

WANDA JACKSON

The rock'n'roll godmother on honky tonkin', sharp dressing and several Elvises.

“THIS PROBABLY will be my last album,” says Wanda Jackson on the line from Oklahoma City. “I don’t foresee wanting to continue any longer, ’cos I retired from travelling a couple of years ago. I miss my fans, I miss performing, but I don’t miss the travel. . .”

The excellent LP in question is called *Encore*, released a mere 67 years after she began cutting records for Decca in 1954. A year later, she was touring with – and dating – Elvis Presley, who told her she had the perfect voice for rock’n’roll.

It is also her first album since she lost the man who travelled that road alongside her for 55 of those years, her husband and manager Wendell Goodman, who sadly died in 2017, and whose presence is felt in many of its songs.

You’ve influenced many women musicians who followed after. Joan Jett is on your new album, and it includes a version of *You Drive Me Wild*, which she wrote for *The Runaways* in 1976

I think it’s just great. Her company is the one that approached me about doing an album, so she helped me get it started, and of course we wanted just to have

original songs on it. My granddaughter is my publicist in Nashville and she set up all these writing sessions with all these great writers in Nashville, so that’s a new experience for me. I’ve never written with other people, I was always by myself, so I learned a lot. We wrote the songs, as well as recorded them, in Nashville. I had to fly back and forth, and trying to coordinate all of our schedules was tricky, but we got it done, and I’m sure proud of it.

Joan’s song was on the list you gave us of five songs you admire, alongside the great Ray Charles version of *Worried Mind*, originally a hit for its co-writer Ted Daffan in the ’40s, back in the golden age of honky tonk music.

Well that’s what my daddy listened to, and my mother, on the radio. They went dancing every weekend, and they took me with them, so yes, I knew Ted Daffan’s version the best. But of course when Ray Charles came out with it, it just blew me away, it was so great.

Your fiddle-playing father bought you your Martin D18 guitar in a pawn shop, and your mother made your fringed stage dress. Both items are on display at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

That’s right. Yeah, my career was really a family affair. Mother made all my clothes,

street clothes as well as stage clothes. They fitted me like a glove and it was very valuable to me. Even these days, that wardrobe is about as important as my records. I was given a little flack for it, here and there, but anyway, my daddy was the one who said, “Do it the way you want to do it.” So he gave me permission. I was kind of a rebel.

In your acceptance speech at your Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction in 2009, you said that your mother was watching, aged 95.

It was very special. She died a couple of years later, she was 97, so bless her heart, she outlived daddy by a long time.

Your husband Wendell led the campaign to have you inducted, supported by such as Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello. I remember him saying when introducing you on-stage in London, “At first I thought, Just what I needed, another Elvis in my life...”

That was funny. My husband was a clown, he was my resident clown. All of these lyrics on the record stem from the stories of mine and Wendell’s married life. He was a one-man show. He did it all, all but the singing, so I still had a job...

Tell us something you’ve never told an interviewer before

(*Laughing*) I don’t think that exists... unless you want to know what I had for breakfast. Actually, I haven’t had it yet. I thought I’d have a cup of coffee and talk to you and then I’d have my oatmeal and my cinnamon.

Max Décharné

Encore is released on August 20 via Big Machine Records/Blackheart Records.

“I was kind of a rebel.”

WANDA JACKSON

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09 OCTOBER NORWICH
UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA
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Trunk route: (clockwise from main) Jonny T; his reissue of *The Wicker Man* OST; new signing Janet Beat.



Clem Burke

Blondie's drummer lauds Bowie's **The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars** (RCA, 1972)



I was just out of high school in New Jersey, about 17 years old, when [it] was released. David was basically an unknown artist in the States, but somehow I became

aware of the *Ziggy Stardust* album. I got it the day it came out. It was funny at the time because it was an anomaly for me to like Bowie. Led Zeppelin and the Grateful Dead were the ruling rock bands my friends were following, but I never really had much interest in them.

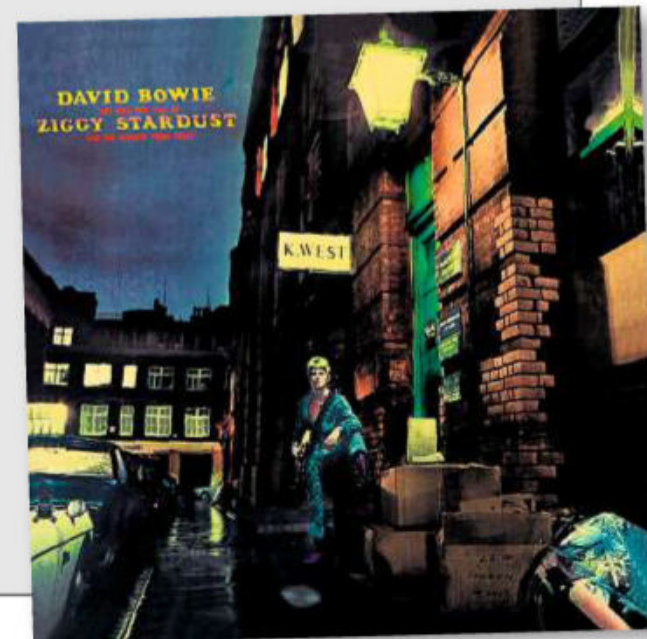
The whole glam rock scene never really happened in the US, but the *Ziggy* album managed to break through. It was more glamorous and very unfamiliar. Lyrically, my favourite track might be *Star or Hang On To Yourself*, and hearing *Five Years*, the nihilism of it really affected me. He was talking about things I hadn't really heard before in a pop song. It was relevant then and is relevant today – it's kind of sci-fi, and we kind of live in a sci-fi age now.

The parts Woody Woodmansey played were integral – he had an intriguing style, not overly complicated but very musical. Emulating his playing helped me become a better drummer. And really, *Ziggy Stardust* solidified my outlook on how I wanted to present myself in a band. David was glamorous, and the band were glamorous. When I was setting out, I was basically looking for my David Bowie and I found [that] in Debbie Harry.

It was amazing that five years after hearing *Ziggy Stardust*, we were on tour with both David and Iggy on the release of the first Blondie album. I would watch them do soundchecks and David would be coming up with new arrangement ideas. Music always seemed to be a work in progress for David, and that was a template for Blondie.

As told to James Allen

Blondie's Vivir En La Habana EP, is out now on BMG. They tour the UK with Garbage in November.



TRUNK RECORDS TURNS 25! BOSS JONNY TALKS THE WICKER MAN, PATIENCE AND SONIC ERUPTIONS

“I WAS first imagined as a way of making records that I needed to own which weren't issued on vinyl,” says Jonny Trunk of the bespoke independent reissue label that bears his name. “But 25 years? I never intended that!”

The Super Sounds Of Bosworth, a trailblazing selection of '60s and '70s library music, set out the stall in 1996. To most, it was their first exposure to advert cues – outside of watching adverts – and recast background sounds-with-an-agenda as a genre worthy of appreciation. Selections were strange, funky, eerie, nostalgic, comedic, naff, utilitarian, familiar yet unknown, and fascinating – just as Trunk itself would prove to be.

The son of an antiques dealer, the young Jonny had been a teenager in late '70s Surrey, liked old films and music, and was not alone in never shaking off the grubby prurience and futurist aspirations of the era. Trunk's next big release was the first ever issue of the OST for 1973 British horror classic *The Wicker Man* in 1998. “It took three years, a weekly process of going, ‘Who can I phone now?’” says Trunk. “It was detective work, which I love. You have to be really determined and patient to do this. I think quite a lot of people would've given up with *The Wicker Man* and said they couldn't be arsed.”

The timing of *The Wicker Man* OST was curious: the still-reverberating acid/pagan folk revival followed soon after. “All we did was light the touch paper,” says Trunk. “But it is everywhere now.” Other threads can also be traced back to Trunk's releases, as library music, Radiophonic experiments and old kids' TV sounds bled into *Hauntology*; a 2011

book of 1972-1977 Sainsbury's packaging even seems to have filtered back into the design of Waitrose's own-brand range. “Some things I do can have a seismic effect years later,” he says. “I see it, but hardly anybody knows, which is quite nice really.”

Lust for glory, it seems, is not the Trunk way. Only a one-man show could have orchestrated a quarter of a century of the most slept-on movie soundtracks, askew jazz, TV themes, home-made space operas, recordings of railway buffet car announcements and lashings of audio-smut, not to mention archival treasures from Basil Kirchin, Delia Derbyshire and now – the latest Trunk discovery – 84-year-old electroacoustic maverick Janet Beat. Or his long-running soundtracks radio show, ‘Pop Trumps’ card games and, lest we forget, 2007's brisk Number 27 hit *The Ladies' Bras* with voice artist Duncan Wisbey (“One day, someone will use that in a bra advert, or on Tik Tok,” says Jonny).

“I think, you know, things have to be done a certain way,” explains Trunk, who admits to owning Beatles and Rolling Stones records as well as deep esoterica. “I've not run out of things to do yet, and if it isn't fun I don't want to do it. It's got to entertain me.”

One record he's currently planning will present incidental music from Hanna-Barbera cartoons. “If I can get this, it will cause

eruptions,” Jonny promises MOJO. “Sonic eruptions! Because everybody I know will wet themselves if they hear it. And that's what it's all about.”

Ian Harrison

25th anniversary collection *Do What You Love* is out on October 1 on Trunk Records.

“If it isn't fun I don't want to do it.”

JONNY TRUNK

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07 OCT - ISLINGTON UNION CHAPEL	21 OCT - BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX
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wishbone ash



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 OCT 28: LEEDS BRUDENELL
 OCT 29: BURY THE MET
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 NOV 03: BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX
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 NOV 18: ISLINGTON O2 ACADEMY
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 FRI 10 DEC HARROGATE ROYAL HALL
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Volcanic Reactions

Under The Volcano revisits the rise and fall of Sir George Martin's AIR Studios.

AS RECORDING studios go, Sir George Martin's AIR Studios was among the more glamorous. Sited on the tiny, emerald Caribbean island of Montserrat, south-west of Antigua, AIR thrived as an idyllic getaway between 1979 and 1989, and the albums recorded there defined the '80s. Yet, nestling picturesquely under the epic shadow of the Soufrière Hills volcano, this eden was snuffed out by a devastating hurricane and, a few years later, an apocalyptic eruption.

New documentary *Under The Volcano* – not named after Malcolm Lowry's 1947 novel of booze and death, says Australian director Gracie Otto – brings AIR back to luxurious life. With previously unseen home movie footage shot by Paul McCartney, Stewart Copeland and studio staff, interviewees include Mark Knopfler, Nick Rhodes, The Police, Midge Ure, Martin's son Giles and, via vintage clips, Sir George himself. They recall the studio with misty-eyed fondness and also candour, reflecting on the personal struggles that remain even when sun, sea and a personal chef are to hand. *Under The Volcano* serves as an extended snapshot of a music industry, before the advent of digital recording, living large for the last time.

After launching the AIR London "hit factory" in 1970, Martin read about Montserrat – a British self-governing territory – in a magazine article, and imagined a haven for artists to escape to. "It was the perfect time for the idea like this," Otto says of those years of expanding recording budgets. "Mark Knopfler told us Dire Straits made *Brothers In Arms* in three days but stayed for a month." Other platinum sellers were The Police's *Ghost In The Machine* and *Synchronicity*, Duran Duran's *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*, three Elton John albums and – just before Hurricane Hugo blew in – The Rolling Stones' *Steel Wheels*. There was more involved than mere recording, of course. McCartney found refuge

in Montserrat after John Lennon's murder; for Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, the relaxed atmosphere melted away years of tension; Stevie Wonder demanded he entertain the locals at a bar. Stewart Copeland recalls, "[The Police] went there for the isolation, but soon found we only had each other to drive each other bananas." Yet they got *Every Breath You Take*, and more, from the experience.

Under The Volcano was producer Cody Greenwood's idea; she'd visited AIR in its heyday, as her mother lived on Montserrat. "It was emotional for her, because AIR is rotting away now," says Otto. "For me, it was nostalgic, almost like missing a great party. But it was sad and eerie too. Some of the artists I showed footage to cried."

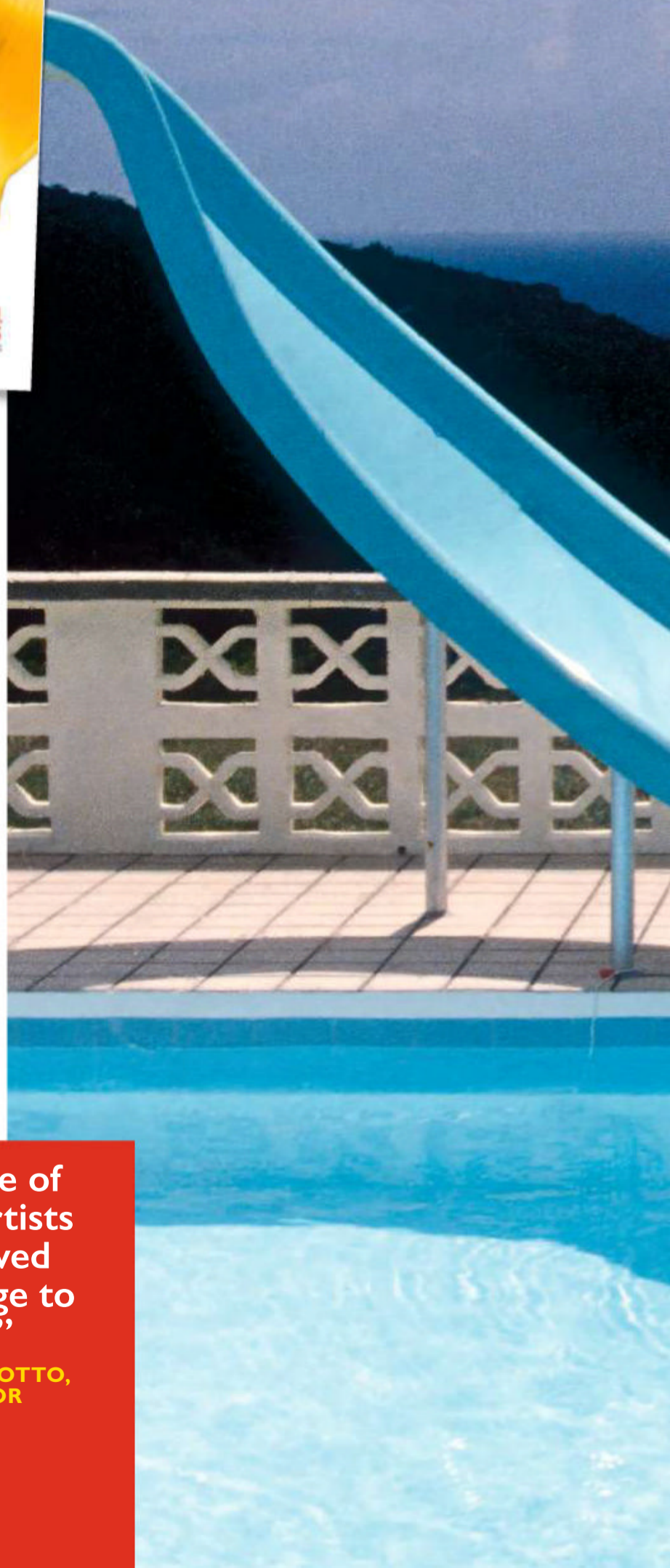
Tragically, 1989's hurricane ruined not just AIR but 90 per cent of the island's buildings. Then, dormant for three centuries, the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted in 1995, poleaxing any hope of recovery. In any case, says chief engineer Malcolm Atkin, "the kind of [recording] budgets people had were long gone. It wasn't the era we built [AIR] for." A philosophical Martin concluded, "It's like everything in life... you bring something out of nothing, and it always goes back to nothing again."

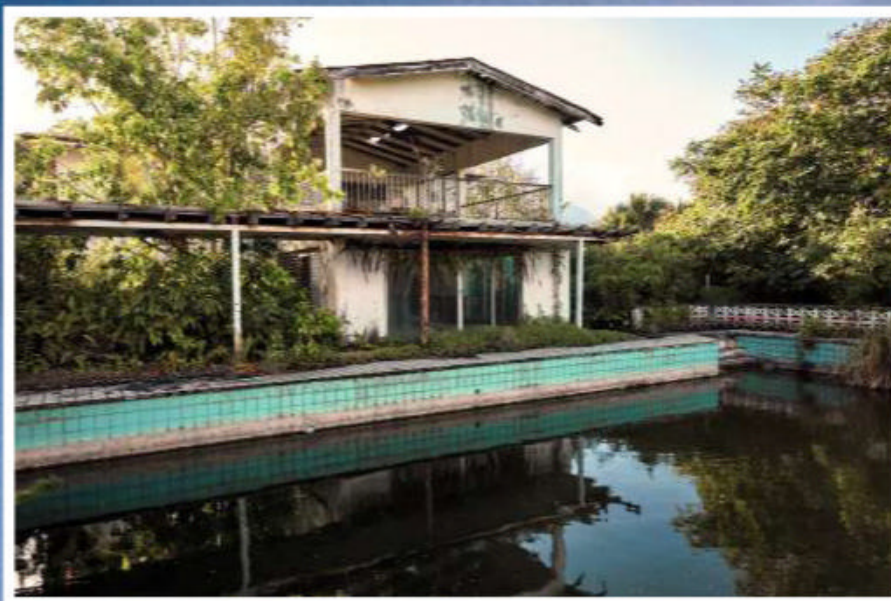
Martin Aston

Under The Volcano is out now on digital, Blu-ray and DVD

"Some of the artists I showed footage to cried."

GRACIE OTTO, DIRECTOR





Coming up for AIR: Sir George Martin at his Montserrat studio complex, 1979; (insets from far left) albums made there; the film poster; the studios then and now.



ROOTS ALLURES!

Three ways to Anglo-American nirvana.

Brinsley Schwarz
Despite It All

(LIBERTY (UK) CAPITOL (US), 1970)



The group found their voice on their second album with its musical menu of lush harmonies, soulful country ballads and some gnarly blues. Includes live favourites Country Girl and brisk rocker Funk Angel.

Brinsley Schwarz
Silver Pistol

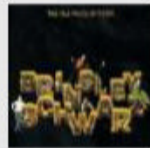
(UNITED ARTISTS, 1972)



Gomm's guitar and songwriting debut, *Silver Pistol* finds the Brinsleys at their closest to The Band, with Bob Andrews' Hammond organ swirl evoking Garth Hudson and Schwarz making no secret of his love of Robbie Robertson's guitar style.

Brinsley Schwarz
The New Favourites Of...

(UNITED ARTISTS, 1974)



Dave Edmunds produced this strong, live sounding set which opens with Nick Lowe's (What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love And Understanding. Thereafter, R&B, pop and country gems abound.

Waiting for the pubs to open: Brinsley Schwarz (from left) Bob Andrews, Nick Lowe, Ian Gomm, Brinsley Schwarz, and Billy Rankin; (bottom of page) Brinsley today.

ONE MORE TIME FOR PUB ROCK ACES BRINSLEY SCHWARZ

FORMED FROM the ashes of late '60s pop triers Kippington Lodge, Brinsley Schwarz found infamy when an April 1970 PR stunt went spectacularly awry. A plan to send the UK music press to see them triumph at New York's Fillmore East collapsed in a farrago of visa skullduggery, plastered journos and the band arriving at the venue five minutes before showtime.

"I was extremely nervous," says Brinsley Schwarz, the guitarist who gave the band its name. "The positive thing was seeing Van Morrison, who was on after us and was blindingly good. We realised that we really weren't, and we had to get a whole lot better."

This they did, and posterity owes the band – Schwarz, Nick Lowe (voice and bass),

Bob Andrews (keyboards) and Billy Rankin (drums) – more than this cautionary yarn. Living communally in Northwood, Middlesex, they'd move away from the CSN harmonies and West Coast moves of 1970's self-titled debut, and gravitate to the Americana of The Band and The Flying Burrito Brothers, refracted through a particularly English lens.

It all ran counter to the emerging progressive and heavy rock scenes, but the Brinsleys looked bound for greatness. They were the first band to play live on The Old Grey Whistle Test in 1971, appeared at the first Glastonbury Festival and did benefits including the Greasy Truckers Party at The Roundhouse in 1972. "I thought we were ahead of our time," says rhythm guitarist Ian Gomm, who joined after the Fillmore East event. "We'd played the opening night of the Hard Rock Cafe in London in 1971. Paul and Linda McCartney were in the audience, and they liked it so much we supported Wings on two UK tours."

Yet a breakthrough eluded them. Instead, their tight, subtle brand of rock'n'roll placed them in the vanguard of the London pub rock scene. "We needed to be close up to the audience, hot and sweaty," says Schwarz. Looking back, it's hard to understand how 1974's wondrous 45 (What's So Funny 'Bout)

including recent sessions/ live comp *Last Orders!*. "That's all I've got left," says Gomm. "My job as band archivist is over."

In 2011, Parker and The Rumour reunited and, with the help of keyboardist James Hallawell, Schwarz cut 2016's solo debut *Unexpected*. Now, new LP *Tangled* is ready to go. "It just developed," he says. "Suddenly I was writing songs. If it hadn't been for Covid I'd have got a band together and done gigs."

Billed as Brinsley Schwarz?

"I know! I can't do anything about that though..."

Mike Barnes. Additional reporting by Ian Harrison

Tangled is out on Fretsore in September. *Last Orders!* is out on Mega Dodo.



"We needed to be close to the audience, hot and sweaty."

BRINSLEY SCHWARZ

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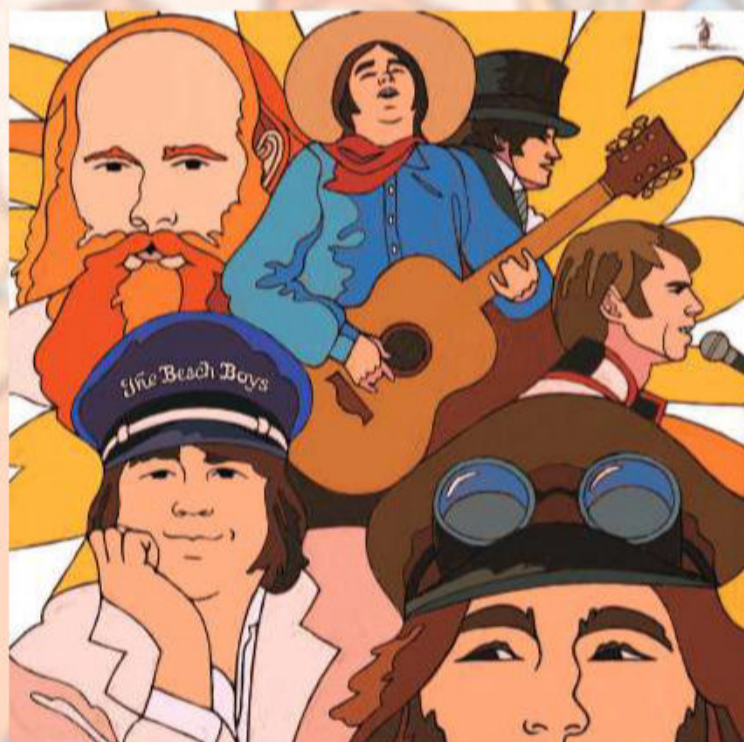
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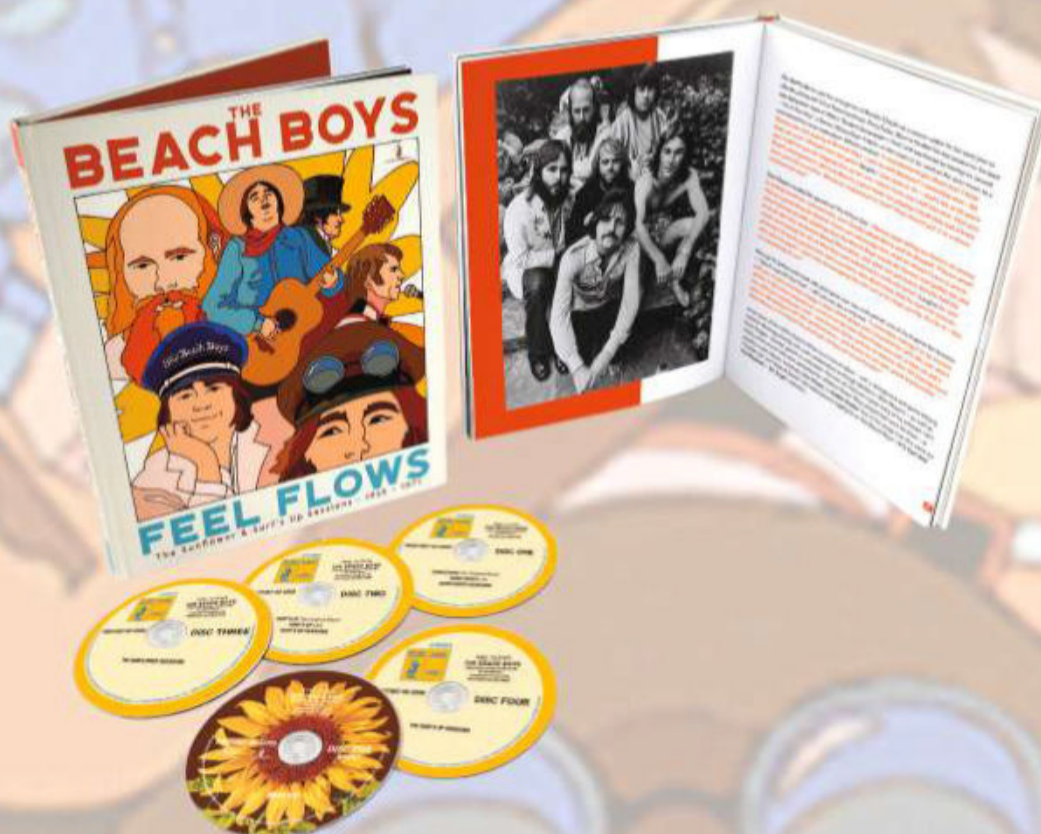


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“Do you want to join this mad circus?”

PIP BLOM

Service station to station: Pip Blom on the verge (from left) Gini Cameron, Pip Blom, Tender Blom, Dareck Mercks.

FROM AMSTERDAM TO SOUTH MIMMS: THE CANNONBALL TRAJECTORY OF PIP BLOM

IN THE second series of her Mixtape Delivery Service radio show, Annie Clark – AKA St. Vincent – put Pussycat, an early blast of indie-rock brio by Amsterdam’s Pip Blom, on a playlist designed to reroute listener “Brook from Milwaukee”’s dull career trajectory in pharmaceuticals toward realising a dream of becoming a writer.

Not yet 25 and already with two LPs to her name, Pip Blom herself needed no such spur. Her parents work for a Dutch music website and enthusiastically aid Pip and younger brother Tender’s musical ambition. Through them, Blom discovered Parquet Courts, Breeders, Micachu & The Shapes; a generation-spanning strain of alternative rock picked up in the nervy thrum of her own guitar pop.

If there’s a drawback to having cool parents it’s an inevitable divergence from your peers, as Blom discovered when searching for likeminded bandmates. “I couldn’t find anyone who wanted to join,” she laughs, speaking from the music room at the family’s home in Amsterdam. “And my brother didn’t want to be in the band either.”

With the songs for debut album *Boat*

already written and a recording session booked, Tender was eventually persuaded to play guitar. Drummer Gini Cameron was found hiding in plain sight (she’d been to their primary school), and bassist Dareck Mercks was recommended by friends. “It was a bit weird,” Blom acknowledges. “Asking someone to join when you’ve already got 100 shows lined up. Like, ‘Hey, do you want to join in this mad circus?’”

By the end of 2019, Britain had become the inner ring of the circus: “I was in the UK almost every month/week.” At this road-weary point, the title for the new album appeared by the side of the M1. “I was fed up,” Blom admits. “And then I saw the ‘Welcome Break’ sign. I was like, Whoa! This is such a cool name.”

With the album’s title settled, she returned to Amsterdam to write the songs, while watching documentaries on TV. “As soon as I play something that grabs my attention more than the documentary, I immediately record that,” she says of her process. “I build songs very mathematically.” Lyrics, she admits, are harder. “There is a distance because it’s not my native language. It’s funny, when my

boyfriend heard [*Welcome Break*] he said it sounded like a breakup record, which isn’t the case.”

Welcome Break was recorded while the band were under 14-day quarantine in Ramsgate, with producer Dave McCracken. This album is “a band project”, says Blom, “a real proper unit”. The songs are stronger and brighter, emerging with new confidence from *Boat*’s layers of distortion. She is especially proud of the die-cut vinyl artwork and contrasting inner sleeve, designed by her boyfriend, and inspired by her dad’s tales of Factory releases.

If there was a new song Blom would offer to boost the resolve of Brook from Milwaukee, it would be Keep It Together. “Because it comes together from an airy, bubbly intro, then the chorus is more rock. More fun. Yeah,” she considers, “I think that would be my thing.”

Jenny Bulley

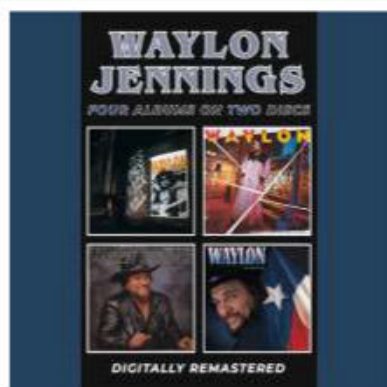
Pip Blom’s Welcome Break is released by Heavenly on October 8.

FACT SHEET

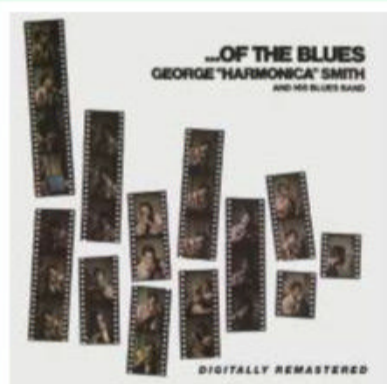
- For fans of: The Breeders, Parquet Courts, Courtney Barnett, Kurt Vile
- Pip Blom surprised even herself when, as a shy 16-year-old, she entered a songwriting contest, using her dad’s three-string Loog guitar to meet the three-song entry requirement. She was relieved to go out in the semis (“It was the most nerve-wracking thing, I hated it”).
- Recorded at Big Jelly Studios, Ramsgate, *Welcome Break* was debuted at the tiny Ramsgate Music Hall to a socially distanced crowd of 10 people.
- Her bandmates note that while on tour in the UK, Pip Blom talks in her sleep in English.

KEY TRACKS

- It Should Have Been Fun
- I Love The City
- Keep It Together



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It's Only Rock & Roll / Never Could
Toe The Mark / Turn The Page /
Sweet Mother Texas
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"HARMONICA" SMITH**
...Of The Blues
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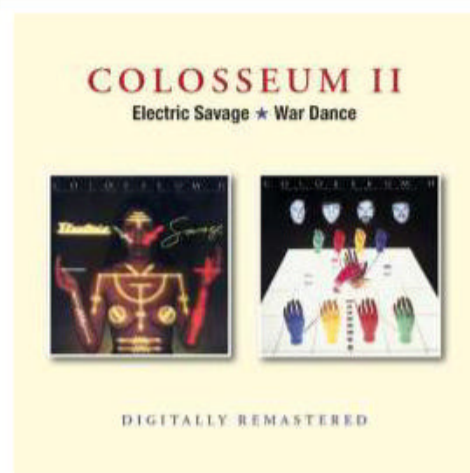
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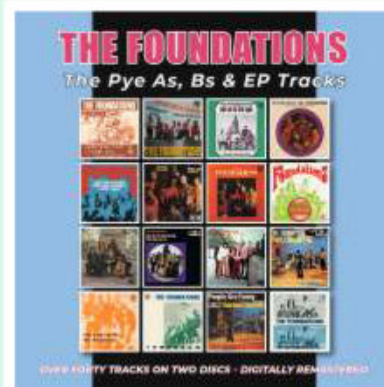
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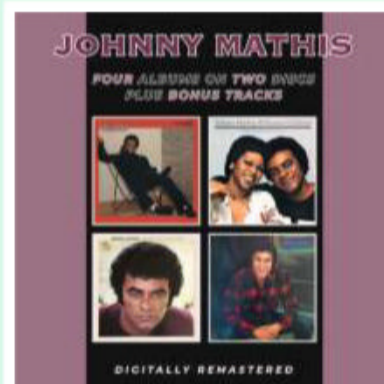
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MOVE ON UP, WITH LA SOUL RE-INVENTORS **GABRIELS**

“THE THREE of us are really invested in the nostalgia of times gone before,” says Ryan Hope, of Los Angeles soul trio Gabriels. “But from a perspective of, like, ‘What are we losing in today’s society?’ We’re into the craft of recording these proper songs that don’t have crazy processing or effects.”

It’s an approach show-cased to stirring effect on Gabriels’ only release to date, the five-song EP, *Love And Hate In A Different Time*, which has already attracted admirers such as Elton John, who declared it “one of the most seminal records I’ve heard in the last 10 years”, and Paul Weller, who chose the rousing Curtis Mayfield-like title track to appear on the *Into Tomorrow* CD that came with MOJO 331.

Gabriels work from a broad sonic palette that stretches beyond soul and R&B, though, with the creaky, brooding drama of *The Blind* sharing some of its aural DNA with the wonkier parts of Tricky’s *Maxinquaye*. The timeworn orchestrated jazz of *Professional*, on the other hand, carries strong echoes of Billie Holiday, sounding as if it could have been rescued from a dusty old 78.

These disparate influences are the result of the three members of Gabriels coming from very different backgrounds. Compton-born singer Jacob Lusk is a gospel choir leader whose past credits include St. Vincent and Diana Ross, while Ari Balouzian (from the San Fernando Valley) is a composer for film and TV, and Sunderland-born Ryan Hope is a video director who relocated to California after being signed to Roman Coppola’s agency, The Directors Bureau.

Gabriels met five years ago when Hope was working on a short film featuring a soundtrack by Balouzian with the choir arranged by Lusk. Inspired, they agreed to start their own collective musical experiments at Hope’s home in Palm Desert. “It was a really slow process,” says Balouzian, “until we figured out the language of writing together.”

Clearly, between them they have the audio and visual bases covered, as evidenced by the striking video for *Love And Hate In A Different Time*. An Adam Curtis-inspired montage of dancers through

the ages, starting with the Edison-shot Sioux Ghost Dance from 1894, it ultimately cuts into an arresting phone-shot scene of Lusk singing *Strange Fruit* through a megaphone at a Black Lives Matter rally in LA. “This is a song that is still ringing true, unfortunately,” Lusk laments.

Meanwhile, work continues on the debut Gabriels album, due 2022. If the trio once seemed unlikely collaborators, it’s clear they’ve found a solid bond. “That’s been the most beautiful thing about this whole experience,” says Lusk. “I get emotional when I’m talking about it. It’s like we’re legit brothers.”

Tom Doyle

Gabriels’ Love And Hate In A Different Time is out now on Atlas Artists/Parlophone.

“It’s like we’re legit brothers.”

JACOB LUSK

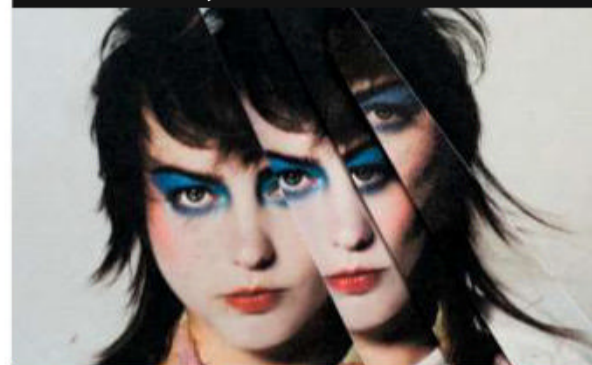
FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Sault, Curtis Mayfield, Tricky, Billie Holiday.
- The cover of *Love And Hate In A Different Time* features a tinted shot of Jacob Lusk’s Shiloh, Georgia-born grandmother, who for the singer is a symbol of living through “all these different periods of the civil rights moment”.
- Lusk had a different experience of growing up in Compton from, say, N.W.A: “It’s rough and tough, but not as rough and tough as people think it is,” he stresses. “It’s mostly homeowners and lower middle class families.”

KEY TRACKS

- *The Blind*
- *Love And Hate In A Different Time*
- *Loyalty*

MOJO PLAYLIST



Arise for the month’s best soul, Afro-jazz and baggy doo-wop.

1 ANGEL OLSEN **FOREVER YOUNG**

Olsen grabs analogue synths and forward-reverses into the ’80s: this Alphaville cover joins Billy Idol, OMD and Laura Branigan classics on September’s *Aisles* EP. **Find it:** streaming services



2 SAUN & STARR **CONFESS IT**

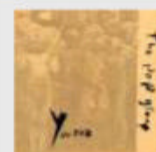
Searing new-old R&B live at Harlem Apollo: from Daptone celebration *Super Soul Revue* – Sharon Jones! Charles Bradley! – out October. **Find it:** streaming services

3 BEACHWOOD SPARKS AND GOSPELBEACH **YOU DON’T SEE ME CRYING**

Neal Casal’s bandmates’ tender cover of one of his finest songs. From *Highway Butterfly*, a 5-LP tribute to the much-missed songwriter. **Find it:** YouTube

4 BUKKY LEO AND BLACK EGYPT **ATOMIC BOMB**

From *The Legend Of William Onyeabor* live at the Jazz Cafe (Drift Recordings), a loose, Afro-jazz interpretation of Onyeabor’s funky epic, led by renowned Nigerian saxophonist Leo. **Find it:** BandCamp



5 THE POP GROUP **WORDS DISOBEY ME (DENNIS BOVELL DUB)**

Mark Stewart and co’s 1979 track rebuilt via echo, splintered rhythms and spacial distortion by mix elder Bovell. From *Y In Dub*, out in October. **Find it:** YouTube

6 FAT COPS **HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

Heat-hazed baggy doo wop, built around a confessional tale of dangerous liaisons in a “static caravan on the edge of Aberfan”. With salty sermons from Loki The Scottish Rapper! **Find it:** streaming services

7 BADBADNOTGOOD **SIGNAL FROM THE NOISE**

Canadian instrumental trio, with plenty of hip-hop bona fides, stretch out into intrepidly proggy new terrain. The jazz Radiohead? **Find it:** YouTube

8 BRUCE HORNSBY **FEEL THE PAIN**

Hornsby’s late-career audacity hits a new high, recasting the Dinosaur Jr lurcher as an austere, jagged piano ballad. It works! **Find it:** YouTube



9 CLINIC **FANTASY ISLAND**

From new LP of same name, masked mystery men of Mersey crank up the Barrett-y dub-pop, with a possible Brexit comment. **Find it:** YouTube


10 JOY CROOKES **FEET DON’T FAIL ME NOW**

Resonant retro-modern soul pop from the south London singer. Bass line slink, Amy Winehouse purr and plaintive-ecstatic chorus stack the odds before next month’s debut LP. **Find it:** streaming services



Angelic delight: Gabriels (from left) Jacob Lusk, Ari Balouzian, Ryan Hope.

THE WAR ON DRUGS
I DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE



THE WAR ON DRUGS

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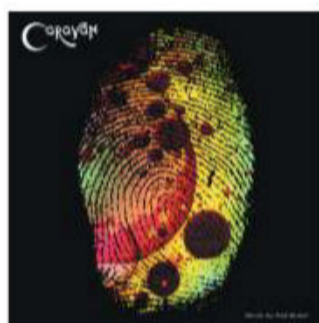
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From painter in oils to sculptor of sound, **The War On Drugs**' mainman has turned panic and breakdown into beatific song, beloved of Bruce and Sir Mick. So what's next? "Now it's time to live it for real," says **Adam Granduciel**.

Interview by **TOM DOYLE** • Portrait by **SHAWN BRACKBILL**

INSIDE ADAM GRANDUCIEL'S HOME RECORDING room in Studio City, Los Angeles, the walls are effectively his personal Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Posters of Tom Petty and '80s-era Bob Dylan are tacked alongside others advertising R.E.M.'s *Lifes Rich Pageant* and The Waterboys' *A Pagan Place*. Today, our host, who could easily be mistaken for a roadie for The War On Drugs rather than their esteemed leader, is sporting a T-shirt bearing the artwork for The Rolling Stones' *Love You Live*.

As a fanboy-turned-rock star, Granduciel's enthusiasms remain close to the surface. Talking about the making of the upcoming fifth War On Drugs album, *I Don't Live Here Anymore*, he's clearly delighted to have followed in the footsteps of some of his heroes by working in the same studios. While referring to Studio B at LA's Sound City as "the *After The Gold Rush* room", he is even more thrilled to have made parts of the record at the Hendrix-founded Electric Lady in New York.

"You know it from the minute you're down in Jimi's basement, there's something there," Granduciel enthuses. "It's not like a *ghost*. It's just the sound of that room."

Absent today are Granduciel's actor girlfriend, Krysten Ritter, and their nearly two-year-old son, Bruce, who the singer concedes is in "a way" named after The Boss. Normally, the toddler is running in and out of here and messing around with the gear. "He loves to take patch cables and plug them in and

turn dials and walk over to the Wurlitzer," says his proud dad. "I'm like, 'Oh, this kid likes exactly the stuff I like.'"

Granduciel, born Adam Granofsky in 1979 and raised just outside of Boston by a father who owned a women's clothing store and a Montessori teacher mother, has taken a circuitous and sometimes torturous route to his current position as a Grammy-winning (for 2017's *A Deeper Understanding*) singer, guitarist and bandleader. Emerging from the alternative scene in Philadelphia, his breakthrough album, 2014's *Lost In The Dream*, was the product of an all-consuming recording process and mixed heartland rock, Neu!-like grooves and trippy layers while revealing the singer's often crippling day-to-day anxiety and depression.

I Don't Live Here Anymore may be The War On Drugs' slickest and most commercial move yet, but on it Granduciel continues to chart his emotional weather, as in the uplifting moment amid muted acoustic opener Living Proof where he declares, "But I'm rising/And I'm damaged..."

"I had those lyrics basically very quickly," he offers. "I didn't think too much about it. I just felt like that."

If The War On Drugs has often seemed like a band name for what is essentially a solo project, Granduciel is keen to point out that the new long-player is far more of a collective effort involving bassist Dave Hartley, keyboard player Robbie Bennett, drummer Charlie Hall, saxophonist John Natchez and multi-instrumentalist Anthony LaMarca. "This ➤

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Sharon Van Etten boosts a booster.



"The War On Drugs has been an influence since I started making records in Philly in 2009/2010. Adam has always been supportive to me and many others. His attention to detail has always struck me. He still remembers the story of a squirrel my father told him. He's like that. Genuine. Brotherly. Sentimental."

“record was more collaborative,” he states, “in the best way.”

What were the very first records that blew your mind?

When I was very young, the only tapes we had in the house were, like, a Billy Joel tape, and a bunch of classical music that my dad listened to. So, I would actually have to say this Billy Joel tape, the album with Uptown Girl on it [*An Innocent Man*, 1983]. In my early teens, I got into the *Nevermind*, Pearl Jam Vs. world. My brother liked Neil Young, so I had *Harvest Moon*. But then, getting into Pearl Jam, when those two worlds collided with *Mirrorball*, that blew my mind because then it also led me down the *Weld* and *Arc* tracks of Neil. I was like, “Oh, I didn’t realise that this guy was also this ridiculous experimental guitar guy.”

As a teenager, you were apparently the textbook loner. You played guitar but never for anyone else to hear?

Yeah, I was kind of an introvert. I was happy enough to stay home on a weekend, and play guitar in my room, and then watch TV with my dad. I don’t think I had an acoustic until I was maybe 19 or 20. So I just had my Harmony electric and my little amp, and maybe a pedal. I had my Neil Young song book, I had my Floyd song book. I had, y’know, 50 fucking song books.

In high school, your French teacher pointed out that a literal translation of your surname Gran-of-sky would be Gran-du-ciel. Did you immediately prefer that name?

It was kind of a joking way of saying my name and then some people would refer to me that way throughout school. And then when I started doing music, giving CDRs of my ideas to friends, I just wrote that [name] down. At that time, it was just a little bit of anonymity, y’know. And I guess it just kind of stuck.

You studied history and fine arts at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. So your aspiration was to become a visual artist?

Growing up, I loved visual arts, I loved painting. And when I finally was old enough to be taking painting classes in oil, I realised pretty quickly that I didn’t have the thing that everyone else in the class had. Oil painting was just a little bit out of my wheelhouse. But I was really inspired by painting, and it was almost like a vehicle to just get lost in music. Because I would paint for hours and hours and listen to all these cassettes I’d made for painting. The painting was an excuse to just listen to tapes for fucking 12 hours. Anything from getting into Miles Davis to my early Beatles phase to Velvet Underground bootlegs. Then I had a moment where I realised that music was the thing that I’d been doing for so long that I should just learn how to do more with it.

In your early twenties, you moved to Oakland, California and were doing a lot of painting and writing, and apparently trying to compile a dictionary?

I moved there because I had a friend who was there. I’d never been to California and at the time I’d been working in restaurants for so long that I knew that I could just go and get a job and make enough to pay the rent. But I was very focused on music. That’s when I got into recording myself. It was like, go to work from three to midnight and work from midnight to eight on music, and then sleep for four hours and go back to work. The dictionary was my oldest friend Julian and I just trying to freeform and free associate with words. At the time, it was post-9/11, but pre-Iraq war. There was like a heavy political edge to our day-to-day and so we were just writing prose, y’know.

This is when you chose the name The War On Drugs. Why was it so appealing?

I just thought it could be a great name for a band. You’re thinking of this hypothetical band

in your mind for these songs that don’t exist yet. It just appealed because it seemed to have everything. It had a feeling to it that seemed to encapsulate rock’n’roll: like, “war” and “drugs”. It felt like it was like every band wrapped up in one or something.

It was around this time you were turned on to Dylan. How much effect did that have on your songwriting?

I knew Dylan obviously. I knew all the hits. What I hadn’t heard was *The Bootleg Series [Volumes 1-3]*, with the early stuff on it, like Farewell, Angelina, and then obviously, the *Blood On The Tracks* acoustic versions. Dylan, I just got into very, very deep, very quickly. Like the Tangled Up... New York session stuff, I started learning that tuning and writing more songs. Yeah, I mean, the Dylan thing has never really ended either.

You’re moving around a lot in this period between the west and east coasts. Did you feel rootless?

Yeah, in the best way. I wanted that, y’know. Not the troubadour thing... I just wanted that restlessness. We were in Oakland for only 11 months, but it felt like years. And then we were like, “Let’s go east.” Myself and my friend Julian hopped on a train. Four or five months later he was in Philly, and I followed him there a couple months after that. But also, around that same time I went by myself to watch that Wilco movie [*I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*, 2002] at the Somerville Theatre in Boston, and I was like, “That is exactly what I want. I want to just be in a room with people being creative.” That was a really inspiring moment, too.

After moving to Philadelphia, you met Kurt Vile, and he became a kindred soul. You’d play in his band The Violators and he’d play in The War On Drugs. You developed together musically?

One hundred per cent. I mean, if I had not met

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Adam’s antics: a growing Granduciel.

1 Adam Granofsky, en route to becoming Granduciel.

2 Portrait of the artist as a young man: Adam Granduciel in 2005, with his portrait of Joan Jett.

3 Shh, constant hitmakers at work: Kurt Vile (left) and Granduciel making early War On Drugs jams.

4 The ambient house: Granduciel and furry friend in The War On Drugs’ Philadelphia home studio, 2010.

5 Light fantastic: on-stage with The War On Drugs at the Latitude Festival, Henham Park, Suffolk, July 20, 2014.

6 The War on Drugs, 2011 (from left) Granduciel, Robbie Bennett, Charlie Hall, Dave Hartley.

7 The current War On Drugs line-up (from left) Adam Granduciel, Dave Hartley, Robbie

Bennett, Charlie Hall, Anthony LaMarca and Jon Natchez.

8 Deeper understanding: on the red carpet with partner Krysten Ritter at the 91st Academy Awards, Dolby Theatre, Hollywood, February 24, 2019.

9 Granduciel in 2011: “I was very uncomfortable in my own body for a long time, and in my own head.”



Kurt, I probably would not have learned how to express myself in a way that felt real. We were both into the same era of Dylan – the Eat The Document, *Live 1966* stuff. The frazzled, acoustic, droning low E string stuff, y’know. Every day, he was at my house in the basement, jamming, or we were at his house, in his little music room, playing acoustics and recording. Then I moved to this other house a year later that I would end up living in for 13 years. That became the headquarters for the music I was starting to make. Definitely, between 2004 and 2010 was the most inspiring time of my life.

Together you and Vile made the first War On Drugs album, *Wagonwheel Blues*, in 2008, and then he had a lesser role in its successor, *Slave Ambient* [2011], before drifting away. In your mind there was still a huge divide between the music you were making and the music that you actually liked and wanted to make?

Yeah. In those early days, it was just all very confusing and felt a little forced, maybe. And I knew that Kurt was on his own path anyway. Like, regardless of even if we had somehow put together the greatest band of all time in that moment for those songs, Kurt was still going to do what he wanted to do. I kept experimenting at home and ended up with *Slave Ambient*. We were on different paths. But we were still walking them together in a way.

Did you go into 2014’s *Lost In The Dream* with a different mindset?

I think my mindset was I had done those two records, which were based more in sound. Like experimenting with my recordings at home and then turning them into songs somehow. And *Lost In The Dream*, I was interested in a little bit of that too. But I was like, “Yeah, it’s

cool that people seem to like these albums, but I don’t feel like I can sit down and play any of these songs with a guitar.” So, I think I just wanted to become better at that. I was like, “I need to have a record where I do it a different way, rather than it’s just all trial and error all the time and you’re just pulling puzzle pieces out and putting another one in, hoping it sounds cool.”

The recording of *Lost In The Dream* was an intense time for you, involving virtually endless and obsessional recording. You

“Taking painting classes I realised pretty quickly that I didn’t have the thing everyone else had.”

nearly pushed yourself over the edge. How do you view that time now?

I was a little lost. I had all my recording gear set up on the first floor of my house. And I just, like, couldn’t even go down there. I was basically living on the third floor of my house. Yeah, it was a very strange time. Very uncomfortable in my own body for a long time, and in my own head. The only respite I was getting from whatever was really fucking me up were these recording sessions that I was booking once every six or seven weeks. Myself and Dave [Hartley], and Jeff Zeigler, my engineer, we would drive down to North Carolina. I’d be like, “OK, once we get in the van, and I’m with my friends, and

we’re working on music, then I’ll feel good.” But then, when I was not working on it, I had zero purpose. I didn’t really have a clear vision for that record other than just trying to follow my instincts.

But *Lost In The Dream* was where The War On Drugs’ sound truly emerged: classic ‘drivetime’ rock lent motorik beats and hypnotic dreaminess. It was quite a leap, wasn’t it?

Oh, a hundred per cent. I think part of that leap was when I went to mix it. Myself and Jeff, we were working on *Lost In The Dream* and it was sounding like everything else we had worked on. I just knew, “Man, if I keep working with Jeff on this, we’re never gonna finish it. We’re just too close. I’m too in my own head.” So for the first time I was like, “I want to find someone else to help me finish this thing.” And Nicolas Vernhes [Deerhunter, Animal Collective] came up. We talked on the phone for about two hours about [classic Roland synths] Juno-60s and drum beats and Suicide and Can and Dylan.

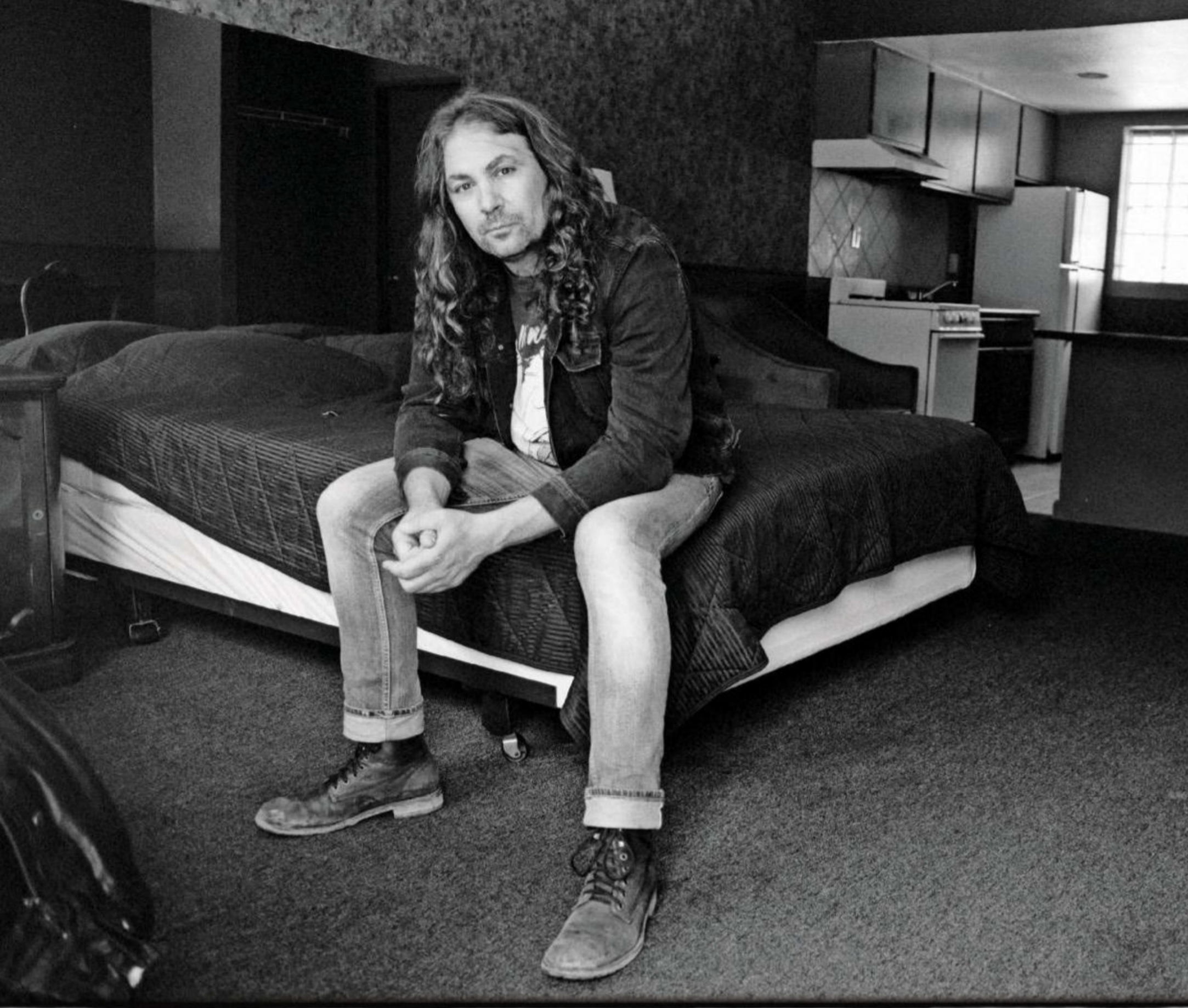
But there was a moment during the mixing in Brooklyn where you felt you had a “total fucking nervous breakdown?”

Basically, yeah.

Were you overwhelmed by what you were creating?

I don’t really know. I mean, when we were working on it, it was a heightened level of nervous anxiety, tension, depression. I was excited that I was liking the sound of my music. But I think I was just very confused about what I was supposed to be doing with my life. At that point, I’d been working on that record forever, and my life at the time was kind of in a shambles. And how much of this is just to, like, satisfy your ego? Or how much of it really ➤





“I just want my music to sound natural. I don’t want it to sound like it’s trying to be something else.”

◀ matters? It still felt open-ended, and it felt confusing. And I felt like I wasn’t sure if I was good at this thing.

It didn’t become clear to me as a record until a couple of weeks later. Ben [Swanson] at Secretly Canadian came down to Philly from Indiana to hear the mixes. We were driving around in his rental car because I was too fucked up to drive. Not like on drugs... I was so anxious all the time, I couldn’t even, like, catch my breath. I was sweating like crazy and playing him the mixes in the car. He was so excited. And I couldn’t even process what that meant.

Under The Pressure became your breakthrough song, detailing your own anxiety. Why do you think it connected so strongly? It seemed to speak to a lot of people who were equally overworked, overstimulated, frazzled...

Yeah, I still don’t know why. It’s like a spirit in the music that just felt very real to me and raw. I think things connect with people when it just feels like the guy making it, or the girl making it, is fully invested in that thing. The only thing

I really had going for me was this set of songs. As much pain at the time as it had brought me, I don’t think the music was bringing me pain. I think it was everything else. But it was the only thing that I really truly cared about. So, maybe that’s the thing. People want to hear something that feels inspired in the most real way.

Did the success of *Lost In The Dream* take you by surprise? It doesn’t seem to have been your plan to become a big band?

Yeah, I was not shooting to become successful in music. I couldn’t have expected how quickly people were responding to it. I was very surprised that it was becoming popular. We ended up with the six-piece band that we are now. And very quickly, the shows were getting moved to bigger rooms and at the festivals in Europe we were playing on the bigger stages.

But The War On Drugs’ sound always seemed destined for big spaces. Bono has said that U2’s music “never had a roof over its head”. Can you relate?

Yeah, I can. I do like that quote. I feel like it’s something people were expecting from us

from *Wagonwheel Blues* in 2008... this kind of bigger sound that I don’t think we could really deliver on. *Lost In The Dream* was the first time the songs felt and sounded big. Once we hit our stride, after a couple of months, we were really very quickly growing as a six-piece unit. It just all lined up perfectly.

Making *A Deeper Understanding* [2017], you had signed to Atlantic Records and were working in Los Angeles in top flight studios. But the intensity and attention to minute detail carried over. You apparently mixed the track *Pain* 30 times? What were you looking for that you weren’t achieving in your mind?

I just want it to sound natural. I don’t want it to sound like it’s trying to be something else. For *A Deeper Understanding*, I hired Shaun [Everett, Alabama Shakes/Grizzly Bear]. We would spend months and years getting a song through all these different phases where we’ve replaced the drums four different times, and I’ve recut the vocals and I changed the arrangement. And at the end of all of that work, we would both look at each other and be like, “Oh yeah,



Living the dream: Adam Granduciel in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles, July 9, 2021.

Shawn Brackbill

sounds like a casual recording of the band." And that's really the essence of what we're trying to get at: the illusion of a casual recording of a band playing as good a song as they can play.

Can you relate to other sonic obsessives like Lindsey Buckingham, or Brian Wilson?

Oh, for sure. You're looking for something that if someone asks you what you're looking for, you can't necessarily explain. But I know when whatever we're working on is not there yet.

You've emerged from the Philly alternative scene as the arena-filling band. Yet you've never been accused by your contemporaries of selling out. Why do you think that is?

I think we just kicked around for years, and we just tried to do our thing. We played so many awful shows. I'm not gonna say we embarrassed ourselves, but we definitely tried it on in front of a lot of people for a lot of years. And y'know, we remained supportive and complimentary of the scene in Philly that we were a part of, and we were social. When *Lost In The Dream* came out and it started to take us around the world, I think people were excited that we had had some recognition, because we'd been kicking around for a while.

So you'd paid your dues?

Yeah, y'know, me and Dave last night were

talking about that first tour we did with my Volvo. Twenty miles outside Philly, going out to Chicago and back, the muffler fell off. It was just me, Dave and Kurt. If you had all the windows up, you would die from the fumes because the catalytic converter had also fallen off. But if you put the windows down, it was so fucking loud. So, we had this 15-hour drive, and it was, y'know, "Do you keep the windows up, or do you put 'em down? Do we die from fumes or do we lose our hearing from the sound of this car in the wind?" That's where we started, man.

How do you view the lower-key successes of some of your friends such as Kurt Vile and Steve Gunn? Do you sometimes envy their less-pressure career paths?

Not really, because those guys do what they do from the heart, and they do it really well. And that's their thing. So as long as people are doing what they want to be doing for those reasons, then, everyone should be psyched

Is there something inherent in your

DREAM HARDER

Three landmarks on Granduciel's sonic journey, by Tom Doyle.

THE SCUZZY COLLAB

Kurt Vile

★★★★★

Childish Prodigy

(MATADOR, 2009)



Recorded in Philadelphia but sounding like it was made in 1970s New York, Vile's louche-rocking third album was co-produced by Granduciel, who also played electric guitar in backing band The Violators. Features, on *Freak Train*, an appearance by the Roland TR-707 drum machine that would drive The War On Drugs' sound (here in a propulsive Suicide-ish role) and the lo-fi sampling of acoustic guitar loops in the reverie-inducing *Blackberry Song*.

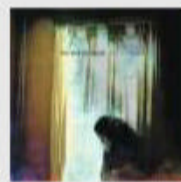
THE TORTURED TREASURE

The War On Drugs

★★★★★

Lost In The Dream

(SECRETLY CANADIAN, 2014)



Taking classic '80s rock motifs and lending them a trippy edge, *Lost In The Dream* was familiar yet unique. Red Eyes sounded like Don Henley's *The Boys Of Summer* buzzed up on cheap bikers' speed, *Eyes To The Wind* was pining balladry *par excellence*, while the last three minutes of the eight-minute-long drivetime rocker *Under The Pressure* beautifully dissolved into ambient noise.

THE BIG LEAGUE BECKONS

The War On Drugs

★★★★★

A Deeper Understanding

(ATLANTIC, 2017)



Granduciel's major label debut sharpened his commerciality but maintained his music's transcendent qualities. Choice fuzz guitar solos punctuated great songs – see the moment at 2:14 in *Pain* where it feels like Neil Young and Old Black have entered the picture. Elsewhere, in the 11-minute *Thinking Of A Place*, Granduciel wallowed in nostalgia and stretched out further than ever before.

make-up that drives you to make the biggest music possible, both commercially and sonically?

Definitely. I mean, I'm a strangely ambitious person when it comes to all this stuff... this whole world that surrounds us, with the songs, but also with the band and our crew. We built a really great family with these songs and the albums. And so how can we take the family to the next level?

Last year you remixed the unreleased Rolling Stones track *Scarlet* [which featured Jimmy Page] for the *Goats Head Soup* reissue. Bit of a dream job?

It was surreal. They sent me the multitracks and for the first three days, I was sitting in my studio soloing Jimmy Page's guitar or listening to Mick. I was like, "You've got to be fucking shitting me." This whole thing blew my mind for, like, a week. So I kind of fucked around with it. Within a day or two, I had taken elements of their recording, and I was running Jimmy Page's guitar through my flanger and Keith's guitar through some amps and Mick through some delay, or whatever. Just kind of stuff I would do to my own music.

Then [management] were like, "They love it. Mick will call you tomorrow." I was like, "Wait wait wait, back it up, back it up..." (*laughs*). It was just myself and Mick, not on FaceTime, thank God, but just the regular phone. He said he loved the vibe, loved the approach and he was so committed to it. He was like, "I got a whole new melody idea for the middle section. I'm gonna fly to France. I'm gonna do this melody." I'm like, "Oh my God, he's hearing it evolve." It was so inspiring because it was like, this guy's still tapped in. The guy's been tapped in his whole fucking life.

Have you met any of your other heroes? Springsteen?

I met Bruce. I went to see his Broadway show. I knew for a couple of years that he was a fan of our band. We went backstage and Bruce just turns to me and gives me a big hug. I mean, fucking A, y'know. It was pretty incredible. We've stayed in touch since. It's inspiring. Just these guys... they're always tweaking, you know what I mean? Tweaking the songs, tweaking the next record, tweaking the show.


There's a sense of greater equilibrium in the songs on *I Don't Live Here Anymore*. Not least in the opening lines of *Rings Around My Father's Eyes*: "I've never really known which way I'm facing/But I feel like something's changed." Can you define what's changed?

I think maybe just a sense of purpose or a sense of acceptance. All you can do is live with a sense of grace and a sense of knowing. Be true to yourself. Be true to your ideals. Be true to the things that you know are inherently important to you. And sometimes, you only learn that by maybe *not* living it. Maybe you only learn that by kind of abandoning those things at times and realising that you're not living, y'know. But at least you know that now it's time to live it for real.

It sounds like some of your old anxieties have faded away?

I think in the way that they had reared their head before... yeah, for sure.

So, ultimately, what drives you on?

I think at this point, with music and really with life – because they're intertwined – just to keep this thing going. I have a responsibility to just keep making the kind of music that I want to be making. To push what I thought was just a dream for myself, which is doing any sort of music for a living. To push it as far as I can. 



The Queen And I

When struggling jazz-pop diva **Aretha Franklin** came to Muscle Shoals, Alabama, in January 1967, it was the epiphany that transformed her art and career forever. Bass man **David Hood** watched the magic happen, and helped the makers of new Aretha biopic, *Respect*, shoot the truth.

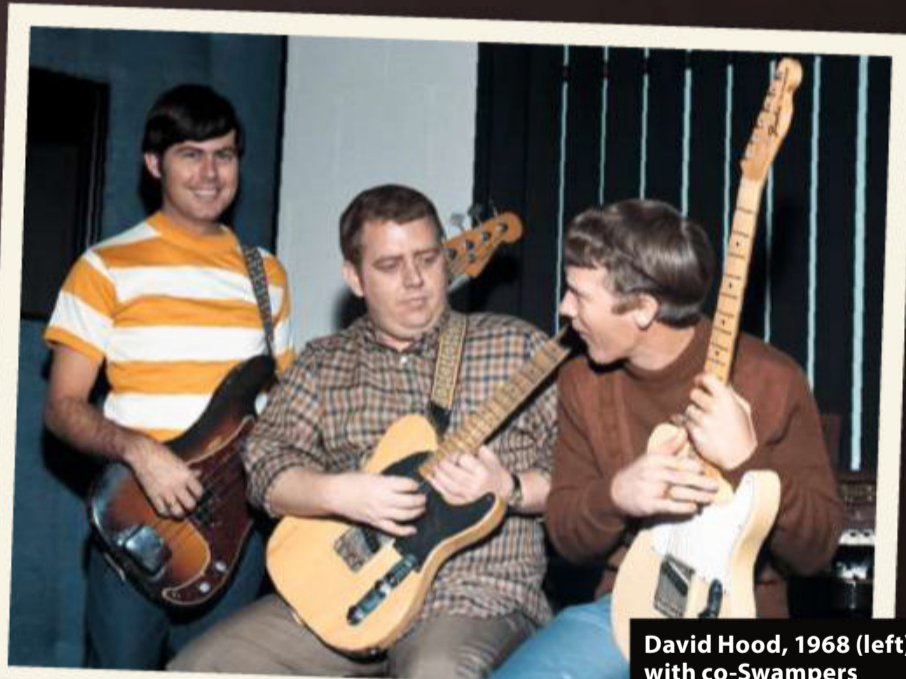
As told to: **Bob Mehr**. Portrait: **Anthony Barboza**.

WHEN WE FIRST WORKED WITH ARETHA, she wasn't a big star. She'd had some albums out on Columbia, but they were almost like easy listening music, and they really didn't sell much. But we knew all about her from working with [Atlantic records executive] Jerry Wexler.

I remember we'd been at Wexler's house and he played us this recording of Aretha doing *My Precious Lord* at church. She was maybe 12 or 13 at the time when this was recorded. And it was so great. We could see why he was really interested in her. Wexler was hot to sign her up. He waited and the minute her contract with Columbia was up [in late 1966], he grabbed her as quick as he could. He really wanted her on Atlantic.

The thing Wexler did, that was the most important decision to me, was he had her sit down at the piano, and sing and play at the same time. Whereas before, when she was at Columbia, she was standing alone at the microphone, and there was an orchestra backing her and all that. But with [Atlantic], he had her doing her own gospel style piano playing. I think that's really what opened the door for her, for her new style – which really wasn't new. She'd been singing and playing like that since she was a little kid in her father's church.

WHEN ARETHA DID HER FIRST SESSION AT FAME studio in Muscle Shoals in January 1967, it was Jimmy Johnson [guitar] and Roger Hawkins [drums] and Spooner Oldham [keyboards], and they'd also been working with Tommy Cogbill [bass] and Chips Moman [guitar] from Memphis. Since Tommy was already playing the bass, I wasn't gonna play. But they needed a horn section. Wexler wanted the Memphis Horns but they were already booked. I could play trombone, I was available and convenient! The horn section was me and Charlie Chalmers ➤



David Hood, 1968 (left) with co-Swampers Jimmy Johnson and Junior Lowe; (opposite) Aretha Franklin, lost in the zone, 1971.

DAVID HOOD has provided the foundation for some of the finest records in the history of American music. A linchpin of the Muscle Shoals Swampers, he began his career in the mid '60s as part of the house band at Rick Hall's Fame studios working with a pantheon of deep soul greats from Wilson Pickett to Etta James. After Hood and the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section established their own studio in 1969, a range of rock and pop stars – Paul Simon, Rod Stewart, Linda Ronstadt – would make the pilgrimage to North Alabama. Now 78, Hood's CV runs the gamut from James Brown and Willie Nelson to Frank Black and Primal Scream, and his musical lineage continues via his son Patterson Hood, frontman of long-running Americana outfit Drive-By Truckers.

Getty (2)

◀ [saxophone], who went on to do a lot of work with Aretha, and a few other guys.

I remember in the studio, when Aretha sat down at the piano to play for the first time, it was unbelievable. I mean everybody's mouths just dropped open. It was a whole different thing being in the room with her. Before that, she'd done these records where she was like a cocktail lounge singer. But when she sat down at the piano she was a gospel singer. And that set the tone for the rest of her career. She was an amazing piano player too. Not schooled really, but just a beautiful flowing player.

We started working on the song I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You). It was a tricky thing, because there wasn't much of an arrangement or a hook at first. Everybody was just working on it for a while trying to get it together. And the horn section, we were waiting for them to get the rhythm track so we could come up with something. Finally, after a couple of hours, Spooner plays this little lick on the Wurlitzer and that was the opening riff – it all came together after that. Then Charles Chalmers went and wrote the horn parts upstairs at the office at Fame and we went down there and put them on there live. It was done in one or two takes, live.

We cut I Never Loved A Man, and got a start on the rhythm track for Do Right Woman, Do Right Man and then everything just fell apart. What caused that session to end or get cut short, was that one of the guys they brought in for the horn section was a trumpet player named Ken Laxton from Memphis. We didn't know him; he was just someone who got added to the horn section. Apparently, he and some of the others were drinking on the session – which is something I would never do! But he started getting kind of fresh with Aretha and Aretha's husband Ted White, who was also her manager.

Well, Ted didn't like that and told Wexler, "Get rid of this guy." And Wexler tells [Fame owner] Rick Hall, who was engineering the session, and Rick sends him on his way. But there were already some bad feelings there with Ted and Aretha.

After we left – and everything that caused that session to end was after the band left – Rick and Ted apparently got into it. I guess Rick had been drinking too, and he said, "I'll go patch things up with Ted and Aretha." And Wexler said, "No, no, don't do it." But Rick went to see Ted back at their hotel... and sure enough they got into it and it came to blows! On the fifth floor of a hotel in Florence! I mean, it got to be pretty serious. They were calling each other names and tussling on the hotel balcony. So that's what ended the session: Ted left, Aretha left, Wexler left. And we thought, "Oh shit – this is gonna end our career with Jerry Wexler!" Luckily, it didn't. But it made Wexler not work at Fame and with Rick for quite a while.

WEXLER CONTINUED PRODUCING ARETHA and took that record to New York, and worked with Tom Dowd and Arif Mardin, but it was mostly the same band, Muscle Shoals guys. After Tommy Cogbill, they had Jerry Jemmott come in and play bass, and eventually it was my turn.

In 1969 and 1970, we recorded with Aretha in New York and Miami for *This Girl's In Love With You* and the *Spirit In The Dark* records. The song I played on that was a big seller was Call Me. She plays a great intro part on that which really exhibits her piano style



Daughter of a preacher man: (clockwise from top left) Aretha in 1967, shortly before leaving Columbia for Atlantic; on-stage at 'Soul Together', Madison Square Garden, NYC, June 28, 1968; fixing her make-up, Symphony Hall, Newark, New Jersey, 1969; Do Right Woman – with producer Jerry Wexler (left) and husband Ted White, 1968; classic Aretha vinyl.

and how good she was. Spooner had quit playing with us, and Barry Beckett was playing keys. But Aretha was always the official keyboard player, because she was so good, and her playing was so intertwined with

what she was doing vocally. She was maybe having problems with Ted or whoever she was with at the time. I do recall it was kind of heavy. When she cut Call Me – which she wrote – as she sang it she was crying. Man, that made an impression on me. It was really heartfelt. It made an impression on me how deeply she felt the lyric.

On that session we also did some Beatles songs, Let It Be and Eleanor Rigby. Let It Be wasn't even out yet, I don't think. I believe Paul McCartney sent her his demo of the song. I tried my best to get a copy of that demo!

The way the sessions usually worked is Wexler and Aretha would spend several days going through songs, hundreds of songs, picking the material she would record. She was very much a part of that. Wexler was a great song guy, but he was a great people person too, so he would get together with her and make sure she was happy with the material. It was always the rhythm section and Aretha at first and they'd bring in the other players – whether it was Duane Allman on guitar or the horns or whoever – later on. Aretha was always very key in the arrangements. She had those arrangements in her head worked out, and she would do the piano and vocals live as we were cutting – she might go back and fix a word or two, but that was pretty much all her live.

As a rhythm section, with me and Roger Hawkins, I think we just



“Even though she was a great performer out in the public, she was really quite shy.”

David Hood

followed Aretha’s lead. We tried to play with her best we could, to fit around her. That was always the deal with me and Roger. Whatever artist we were backing, we’d tried to feel like we were the artist’s band. That was definitely the case with Aretha because she was very much the centre of everything and so we adapted what we did to working with her.

Later on, we went down to Miami and cut with her. Jerry Wexler and Tom Dowd both had homes in Miami so they loved recording down there, at Criteria Studios. We didn’t particularly like Criteria but we liked working with Jerry and Tom. Actually, Wexler wanted us to move to Miami, and be the house band, but we were small town Southern guys, we didn’t want to move there. When we told them that, they put together the Dixie Flyers – which was [guitarist/pianist] Jim Dickinson and a few other people who became the [Miami] band for Atlantic. They were all good players but they weren’t as tight as we were as a unit. So we ended up playing on that Aretha session some, for *Spirit In The Dark*. That wasn’t a big seller at the time, but it’s a real sleeper record, I think.

I NEVER REALLY GOT TO KNOW ARETHA WELL personally. I don’t know that any of us did. I do think she had an attachment to Jimmy Johnson and Roger Hawkins especially. I know when they had the hits on I Never Loved A Man, that she gave those guys watches as a thank you present. But she was a very quiet person. Even though she was a great performer out in the public, she was really quite shy. So it was never like “Hey Aretha – how ya doing?” It was never that. Everyone was there to do their job. And when you listen back to those records, I think everyone

was doing their job really well.

Years later, in 2011, I was part of a tribute to Aretha Franklin in Cleveland at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Bobby Wood from the Memphis Boys put the band together. We weren’t supposed to play with Aretha, we were

backing with all these people who were doing Aretha songs. But she was there watching and finally at the end of the show she came out unannounced and unplanned and played A Song For You – the Leon Russell song she did on *Let Me In Your Life* [1974]. We hadn’t rehearsed it and we didn’t even know what key it was supposed to be in at first. But we figured it out and followed along. Aretha was ad libbing and doing all these flourishes on the piano. Unfortunately, that was the last time I saw her.

It’s strange to be thinking back on all this because they’ve been doing this movie *Respect*. Last January, we watched them shoot some of the film over in Atlanta. The part we went to watch was the bit when she comes to Fame and records I Never Loved A Man. We went over there to offer suggestions, consult on it a bit and make sure they got it right. The funny thing is they had a guy there playing me! It was so strange, having a guy playing a 25-year-old version of me. But he could actually play the trombone.

Then just the other day Jennifer Hudson came to Muscle Shoals, came to Fame and they filmed her in and around the studio for a documentary segment. She’s a beautiful lady and a great actress and singer, just one of the nicest people I’ve ever been around. I think she’ll make a great Aretha. But, of course, there’s only one Aretha. **M**

ARETHA: THE MOVIE!

TURN FOR THE LOWDOWN WITH DIRECTOR AND STARS...



Soul Serenade

Before she died, **Aretha Franklin**, told Jennifer Hudson she foresaw “a big motion picture of her life”. But how did its makers match music’s greatest voice and reveal its most private personality? “We had to bring our A-plus game,” they tell **Andrew Collins**.

TELL THE TRUTH OR REHASH THE legend? – it’s the dilemma of any biographer, in film or in print. But the story of popular music’s greatest singer posed more specific challenges. While *Respect* – director Liesl Tommy’s Aretha Franklin biopic – was in development, its subject was still alive and not content to be a passenger (the makers of *Amazing Grace* – the 1972 Aretha concert film blocked by Franklin for 46 years – might sympathise). And when alive, the singer was never eager to share her secrets. But as the first minutes of *Respect* make clear, one punch was not going to be pulled.

The scene is a social gathering at the home of Franklin’s preacher father Clarence (Forest Whitaker). It’s Detroit, circa 1952, and a 10-year-old Aretha (Skye Dakota Turner) is paraded through a forest of black notables (Mahalia Jackson, Smokey Robinson, Sam Cooke), to sing for her supper to whoops of admiration and delight. Later, another party, Aretha not much older: a man comes to her bedroom and locks the door. Cut to 12-year-old Aretha, pregnant with her first child before her musical journey had even begun.

It’s a keynote in a film that addresses Franklin’s “demons” and the exploitation that conceivably begat them. The core creative team – Cape Town-born theatre director Tommy plus screenwriters Tracey Ann Wilson (who, also theatre-schooled, staffed on six seasons of *The Americans* for FX) and Callie Khouri (*Thelma &*

Louise, ABC’s six-season *Nashville*, *Mrs T Bone Burnett*) – were clearly never in two minds about where to start, and where to end their film.

“Producer Scott [Bernstein] called me in for a general casual chat,” Tommy tells *MOJO*, “and I’m not very good at general casual chat.” Instead, she walked in and set out her stall: start in the church, end in the church, and lower the curtain in 1972. Tommy giggles: “They were definitely startled by the specificity of the casual chat!”

Respect is not the first dramatised depiction of Aretha; it’s not even the first this year (Cynthia Erivo from *Stockwell*, south London played Franklin in eight parts for National Geographic’s *Genius* series). But it finds a through-line that goes wide and deep, broadsheet and tabloid, with connections both intimate and showbiz, providing meaningful exchanges. In a sweet scene at the piano, young ‘Re’ and mother Barbara (Audra McDonald), communicate in song. Mum tells her never to think she has to sing if she doesn’t want to – advice that colours the seeming stubbornness of Franklin’s later career. It’s deft work by the writers: was there anything in Franklin’s story that was new to them?

“Her John Hammond years,” jumps in Wilson, referring to Columbia’s failure to convert the young Franklin’s gospel talent into hits. “She put out these beautifully sung and produced albums of standards that no one wanted to buy. That really broke her heart... and terrified her about her future. She struggled.”

To preserve our sympathy, did they “tone down the diva”?

“Divas are not born,” Wilson states. “They have to be *allowed* to take up space like that. She was famously shy. Look at interviews, she’s very restrained. I was fascinated by someone who sounded like that, who grew into such power. A story about a woman who has to fight for her agency is always relevant, unfortunately. Look what’s going on in court with Britney Spears.”

RESPECT HAS SEVERAL UNFAIR advantages over National Geographic’s effort, but the most obvious one is Jennifer Hudson – breakout star of *American Idol* in 2004, and, crucially, similarly Baptist-raised and a 7-year-old star of her church choir.

Franklin had made a note of Hudson’s Oscar, Golden Globes and Grammys for the 2006 stage-to-screen smash *Dreamgirls*. Hudson found herself compared to “the young Aretha” in *Variety* and *Rolling Stone*, while Clive Davis identified her as “the next generation’s Aretha.” It was, then, foretold.

“Jennifer is a mix of unicorn and rainbow,” according to Marlon Wayans, who plays Aretha’s first husband and manager Ted White in *Respect*. “I worked 22-hour days on *White Chicks* [the cult comedy in which he and brother Shawn ‘white up’ as female undercover cops], but to watch this woman effortlessly, day after day after day... she always made the song sound better. We had to bring our A-plus game.”

Gushing admiration for Hudson’s work ethic – she taught herself to play piano, because that’s

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Climbing higher mountains: (opposite page) Jennifer Hudson as Aretha at the piano gets to know the Muscle Shoals team; Hudson with director Liesl Tommy (above); Aretha-Jennifer with Dinah Washington (Mary J Blige).



Respect



Director: Liesl Tommy

UNIVERSAL. C

Never less than thoroughly entertaining, frequently spine-tingling and touching delicately on the darkness that lay behind Franklin's suspicion of outsiders, growing horror of exploitation and longer periods of withdrawal, *Respect* combines the "give 'em the hits" rubric of a *Bohemian Rhapsody* with aspirations towards a more nuanced psychological biography. Sometimes its broader strokes frustrate – Franklin's dive into booze is communicated with a comically vast array of empties, and her redemption is conveniently abrupt – but the strength of the cast (Forest Whitaker is terrifying as Aretha's churchman father, Clarence) and attention to detail (the scenes at Fame are especially *echt*) offset, and there's barely a moment you're reminded that you're *not* watching the actual Aretha Franklin. Jennifer Hudson's performance, and singing, are that good.

Danny Eccleston

what Franklin did – is not hard to come by. Whether the scenes are in the studio – the storied creation of *I Never Loved A Man* (The Way I Love You) in Muscle Shoals, along with the brawl between Ted White and owner-producer Rick Hall that nearly ended Franklin's career revival before it began – or on stage, Hudson brings an uncanny mastery of Franklin's range.

Stand-up and podcaster Marc Maron, playing Jerry Wexler, observes: "One of the ways in which Jennifer rose to the job was that all the songs that were sung were for, or around, charged events, like Martin Luther King's funeral. She was able to bring the emotion, to capture the time, the event, and also the song, and interpret it in her way – interpretations of Aretha Franklin songs that are also unique to Jennifer."

"I spent 15 years in theatre and rehearsal rooms," says New Jersey native Wilson, whose passage to TV was laid by NBC's *Do No Harm*. "And I was really looking forward to making scenes about the creation of work, because I don't feel like I see enough of them." She now cherishes hearing an instruction to Hudson in playback from the *Respect* sound booth. The note went, "Put some more Aretha on it." And she did.

Is Hudson a diva in real life?

"I would be," grins Tommy.

out to honour the guy! He's a legend." But he has a caveat: "There's a coupla eras, I think, where you're always gonna be upstaged by the outfits! From the late '60s to the early '70s, they shouldn't even set films in that time! Especially with white people. Because they're always gonna look like clowns."

The world and life of the black church – formative for Franklin, for good and ill – is perhaps the most richly rendered milieu. For Tituss Burgess,

"Jennifer was able to bring the emotion, to capture the time, the event, and also the song." Marc Maron

who plays preacher and Franklin family friend James Cleveland, it was a matter of channelling his upbringing in Athens, Georgia.

"It sparked several different emotions," he reveals. "I began to call on memories of my grandmother and my mom, where we were sitting in church, what we ate. In those formative years I learned about Aretha. And that is where I drift off to when it's time for me to come back to my centre. It's the same for Jennifer. So, no, it wasn't hard to suspend it or put on and pretend, because *we weren't pretending*."

Respect was always plotted to climax at the

recording of *Amazing Grace* in 1972 at New Temple Missionary Baptist Church, Los Angeles, led in call-and-response by the real James Cleveland. For Burgess, it's the psychological and spiritual crux of Franklin's journey.

"Outside of success, Aretha found her centre again. She'd lost it. That's why she had such a strong reaction to releasing the film of *Amazing Grace*, even though it had been her idea. Our film could stop there because she got back to her base."

But if the meticulously recreated New Temple Missionary Baptist Church is where the film leaves Jennifer Hudson, it's not where it leaves Aretha Franklin. As end-credits roll, real footage of the 73-year-old singer at the Kennedy Center delivers us back to December 2015, where she pays tribute to Carole King, belting out (You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman in front of the enraptured songwriter and stoked Obamas, throwing off her fur coat mid-homage. After two and a half hours investing in Aretha's ups and downs, it's overwhelming, and a surefire way of nailing even the fidgety to their fold-out seats. MOJO calls it audacious. Any misgivings from the people who made it?

"I did wrestle with it," Wilson admits. "Because, ugh, the biopic clichés! But here's the real person! I knew the film would stand on its own merits, but that we should also see Aretha. It gave us a beautiful climax."

"Why be frightened of showing her, in full flight?" Tommy adds.

Why, indeed.



Respect is in UK cinemas from September 10.


AUTHENTICITY IS AN ELUSIVE GRAIL in the music biopic. *Respect* tries its level best to be true to the mid-late '60s, and Marc Maron goes out of his way to deliver a believable Jerry Wexler: "I really sought

FROM DYLAN'S HOME TOWN SPRING THE FRAGILE ECSTASIES OF **LOW**,
FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS A BYWORD FOR QUALITY IN ALTERNATIVE ROCK.
AND THAT'S IN SPITE OF THE UNIMAGINABLE DEMONS THAT HAVE
TORMENTED ONE HALF OF ITS MARRIED CORE, AND THE FALLOUT FOR
FAMILY AND FANS. "TESTING PEOPLE'S PATIENCE WAS AN INTEREST
FROM THE BEGINNING," THEY TELL **VICTORIA SEGAL**
PHOTOGRAPHY: **NATHAN KEAY.**



GRACE UNDER

PRESSURE

A full-page photograph of Alan Sparhawk, a man with long, wavy, light-colored hair and a beard, sitting on a large piece of weathered driftwood on a sandy beach. He is wearing a black double-breasted trench coat, black pants, and black Chelsea boots. A Fender Telecaster guitar with a sunburst finish and a black strap lies on the sand to his right. The background shows the calm blue water of Lake Superior under a clear sky.

LAST SPRING, ALAN SPARHAWK AND MIMI PARKER started broadcasting a more-or-less weekly show from the basement of their house in Duluth, Minnesota – way north on the corner of Lake Superior. During *It's Friday, I'm In Low* they played songs from their 13 albums, including their new one, *Hey What*. There have been covers (Move On Up, What Goes On, and at the urging of son and occasional bassist Cyrus, Childish Gambino's Me And Your Mama) plus Vansplaining, a segment on life as a touring musician. In even quieter moments, Sparhawk visited the vegetable garden to show how his tomatoes are coming along or explain how to harvest a beetroot. Equally wholesome – and inspired by the guitar lessons he gives to children at a nearby school – the man who has often said he feels his relationship with his audience is one of confrontation, taught viewers how to play Low songs. “It’s a lot easier than you’d think,” he deadpanned.

“That’s what he insists,” laughs the brisk, friendly Parker, who has left her drum kit and is now sitting in her daughter ➤

Nathan Keay

Sheer weight of water:
Low's Mimi Parker
and Alan Sparhawk by
Lake Superior, Duluth,
Minnesota, May 10, 2021.

◀ Hollis's calm green bedroom. "He never feels like the songs are that complex."

"It's kind of fun to show people that, 'Yeah, it's just these three chords over and over again; you can do this,'" says Sparhawk later. "It's more about your creative decisions, and your personality, and the chances you take. That's what makes it interesting – not the fancy chords."

In this case, those who can, teach: their decisions, their personalities, have made Sparhawk and Parker one of the most fascinating musical partnerships of the past 30 years. "Low is one of the all-time greatest American rock bands, bar none," says Jeff Tweedy, producer of their 2013 album *The Invisible Way*. "A great gift to anyone aspiring to make art. All you have to do is look to Low to see how high the bar is."

ORIGINALLY BRACKETED IN THE MID-'90s WITH Codeine and Bedhead as 'slowcore', the dreamy fallout from Galaxie 500 and American Music Club, Low have spent 27 years in quiet evolution, moving from the elongated shadows of 1994's debut *I Could Live In Hope* to the end-times distortions of 2018's ecstatically received *Double Negative*. Yet there is also a compelling backstage jostle between the transcendence of their music and the solidity of their domestic life. They are married, have never moved from Duluth, are Mormons, and when they had their daughter in 2000, she came on the road in her car seat. "The marriage is basically the band," says Parker. "We've had a number of bass players and I'm sure it's been challenging at times for them to deal with us." Zak Sally, Low bassist between 1995 and 2005, agrees. "Navigating that stuff for everybody isn't easy. Are they my bandmates? Are they my best friends? Are they my family? Arguments or disagreements – or even agreements – can come up and it's like, 'OK, are we talking about the band or the marriage?'" (Bassist Steve Garrington, who arrived for 2011's *C'mon*, left during last year's lockdown: "I wanted to acknowledge the weariness I felt from travelling and touring," he tells MOJO. "I sensed another path and I want to be open to possibilities presented along the way.")

If the British press in particular were quick to label them "quiet married Mormons", did their congregation pigeonhole them as "in a band"?

"It's still a conversation starter among people that we know," says Parker smiling. "They have a lot of questions." If she meets somebody who doesn't listen to much music, she says, she might bring up Low's Christmas EP from 1999 – a collection of carols and festive songs that saved their financial skin when Parker was pregnant with Hollis and their beautiful drone version of Little Drummer Boy was used in a advert.

"Everybody [in the community] wants everybody to understand that they're well-rounded people and they're not judgmental," says Sparhawk. "I think it's just refreshing when they have something they can point to and say, 'They're doing something interesting and edgy – but they still believe in being kind and they'll sit next to you in Sunday school.'"

"Having a mental breakdown a couple of years back really helped clear the air," he continues. "I think everybody in the congregation knows that I'm struggling just like everybody else. I think everybody who needs to know knows that I'm troubled and that I've also had some drug issues from time to time and some pretty odd



"Minnesota hick farm kids": Low 1994 (from left) John Nichols, Alan Sparhawk, Mimi Parker; (top) 1999's *Christmas* and new album *Hey What*.

behaviour here and there. I'm pretty comfortable with that and anybody who would look sideways at you for that... I don't know if that bothers me, really."

Recorded, like *Double Negative* and 2015's *Ones And Sixes*, with Bon Iver associate BJ Burton, *Hey What* continues their investigations into broken communication, internal struggle, survival. Yet unlike their predecessors' craters and quicksands, these songs feel as if they have emerged from a fog into somewhere high and bright, briefly able to see above the clouds. The galactic folk-

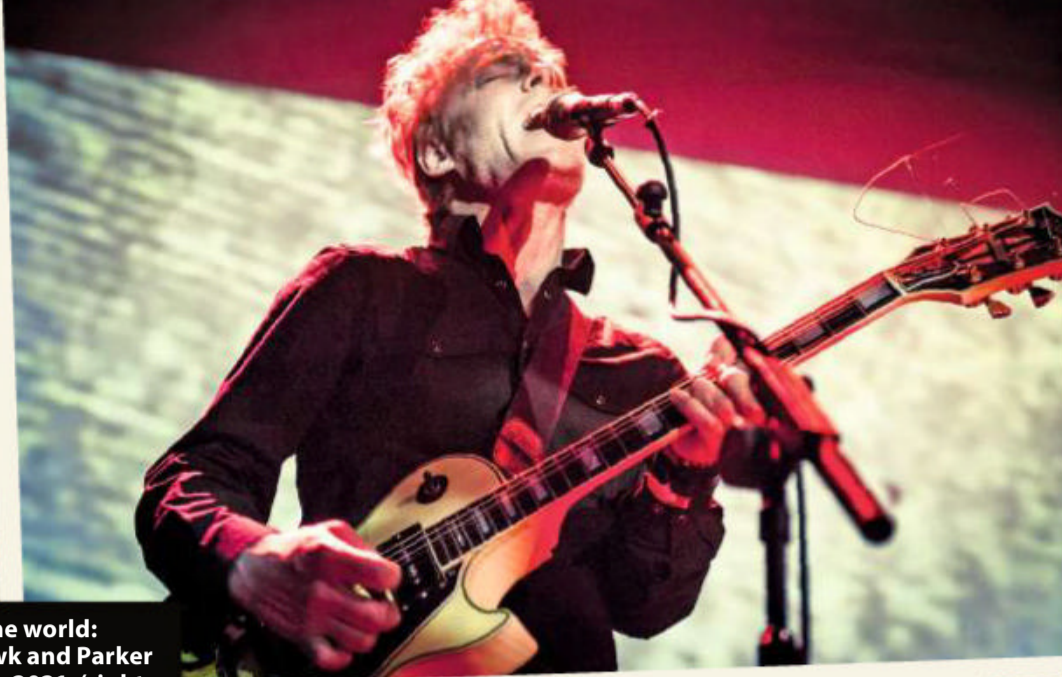
metal of *More*, says Parker, is a protest song. Opener *White Horses*, meanwhile, is about "this search for transcendence, this surrender to the universe," says Sparhawk. "That song in particular came out of therapy."

I'm always dealing with mental health stuff and there's been some moments where I've come to the surface and maybe taken a deep breath and that song came out of that. Let's try to see if there's some sense of something rising out of the ashes. That last record, we'd really redefined our vocabulary more so than most other records and what do you do after that? It wasn't necessarily, 'OK, let's make it even crazier' – it was more, 'OK, this is a really interesting new language. Let's use this as a vehicle instead of a cage.'"

DULUTH IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF BOB DYLAN – AND AS A result, laughs Sparhawk, houses "a few more kind of grizzly folksy songwriters *per capita* than other places." Dylan is "in the blood of the community" and for young punks like Sparhawk, he was something to kick against. "Of course," he says, with one of his



Joy to the world: Sparhawk and Parker at home, 2021; (right, top) on-stage, Madrid, 2013; (below) circa *The Invisible Way* (from left) Steve Garrington, Sparhawk, Parker.



“LOW HAD THIS INCREDIBLE POWER THAT A LOT OF GROUPS DIDN’T. THEY COULD DRAW YOU INTO THEIR WORLD.” WARREN ELLIS

many resigned laughs, “you also want to be that mysterious artist that has never-ending integrity no matter what twists and turns you take.”

Sparhawk moved to Minnesota from Utah when he was eight or nine, meeting Parker shortly after: his family’s home was “this sketchy 280-acre piece of land that was mostly swampy and had some fields. We raised cows. I milked goats by hand pretty much my whole adolescence, drove a tractor, harvested oats and hay. It was a farm and it sucked and it was dangerous. You see a lot of death and a lot of suffering.”

His father was a drummer, “kind of a jazz guy” with a country background; Sparhawk and his family would sing in church. “When I was 14 or 15 my parents were divorced and picking up the guitar was kind of my own thing. Punk rock was exciting, it felt like, ‘This is my own world, this is my language.’”

There were, however, problems with being an obsessed teenager “out in the sticks”. “There just weren’t hardcore shows to go to right away when I was 15 – I had to read about them or hear about them from cousins or friends who lived in bigger cities. I had to learn it all myself.”

Parker comes from a similarly musical background – her mother was an aspiring country singer and she grew up listening to Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, a little gospel. Her sister played guitar with a performer’s ambition, taking Parker to sing Joy To The World at senior citizens centres. “She would sing the lead and I would sing the harmony,” says Parker. “I was pretty shy and didn’t really see that as my future. Honestly, it wasn’t until we started the band that

I really felt like this was something I could do. I was still very timid and shy and it’s safe to say Alan kind of dragged it out of me.”

Parker’s voice remains one of Low’s natural wonders: Zak Sally describes it as “just like water going down a stream”. It’s not just beautiful – there’s an implacability to it, a clarity that’s key to the band’s ability to disturb and disrupt. “Some people will say, ‘Oh, she sounds like an angel,’” Parker says, “but mostly I’m thinking, ‘Hmm, I don’t know if I want to sound like an angel – it sounds maybe *too* nice.’”

Ask Sparhawk what Parker dragged out of *him*, and he smiles. “She dragged a shred of integrity out of me. I’m the id and she has helped me to point my chaos in more productive directions.”

Parker is, says Sparhawk, “very private” but he quickly realised there was nobody he would rather be in a band with. Working at Duluth’s lakeside DECC Arena, he found a drum in the basement and brought it home to her. “I’ve known her since we were kids; I knew that she had an amazing voice and I knew that she loved music and she had as acute a taste as anyone I knew. I coerced her for sure, coaxed her in, but that’s been the nature of our relationship. I had to convince her into kissing the first time we were out, too.”

He laughs and shakes his head. “That sounds terrible! To this day she’s very cautious and I have to consider that when we’re navigating in public.”

IF *DOUBLE NEGATIVE* WAS THE MOST DRAMATIC WRENCHING of the band’s sound into new forms, their experimental impulse is not new, even predating the 14-minute Do You Know ➤

◀ How To Waltz on 1996's *The Curtain Hits The Cast*, or 1997's abstracted *Songs For A Dead Pilot* EP. Sally, who joined Low for 1995's *Long Division* after original bassist John Nichols left, first met Parker and Sparhawk when he was 15. He and Sparhawk formed a band called 12:38, their fondness for Big Black and Joy Division cut with curiosity about Scratch Acid and Jandek. They would play over a backing tape that mixed Sounds Of The Barnyard sound effects and Madonna. "We'd play Sister Ray for way longer than anyone could or should. That's only relevant to Low in that 'testing people's patience' was an interest from the very beginning."

In 1994, Sparhawk, Parker and Nichols drove to New Jersey to record *I Could Live In Hope* with Shimmy-Disc supremo Kramer. They were, says Parker, "Minnesota hick farm kids, basically – we'd been out of the state maybe once, to Wisconsin." By their fourth gig, at New York's Knitting Factory, they realised they were not destined to be hometown Friday night favourites. "We were weird enough maybe for just one or two people to come up to us and tell us that was really great. That was just enough."

Their quietness was, in the early days, its own form of confrontation, forcing audiences to listen, lean in – or to react with hostility. "We played CBGBs in New York and the sound guy was like, 'You guys sing like mice,'" says Parker. "But I guess it wasn't enough to disturb us." Warren Ellis toured the US with Low in 1998 after his group The Dirty Three released *Ocean Songs*; "Everyone was so loud and messy – we were still on the coattails of grunge. They had this incredible power that a lot of groups didn't have. They could draw you into their world without pummelling you over the head with volume, which was certainly what we did with The Dirty Three. We went for it, blood and spit and just hammering it, but they had this incredible way of drawing the whole audience in."

In 2001, Low asked the Australian trio to join them recording the *In The Fishtank* EP: "They were so precise and dedicated and so controlled – kind of like everything we weren't," says Ellis, who calls the band "extraordinary". Sally confirms this. "It was, 'How do we do this exact thing in the most precise and controlled way possible?'... If you're invisible, you're doing your job well."

Low would go on to work with Steve Albini on 1999's *Secret Name* and 2001's *Things We Lost In The Fire*, and Dave Fridmann on 2005's *The Great Destroyer* and its 2007 follow-up *Drums And Guns*. In 2005, however, Sparhawk experienced a cataclysmic breakdown in which he believed

THE NETHER WORLD

Six of the best LOW albums, by Victoria Segal.

I COULD LIVE IN HOPE

★★★★

(Vernon Yard, 1994)



This, then, is slowcore (a useful term, says Sparhawk wryly, for distinguishing Low from "black metal or hip-hop"). The drowsy closing cover of *You Are My Sunshine* isn't entirely in keeping with the rest of Low's Kramer-produced debut, a record that picks up dark threads from Joy Division and early Cure as much as *Galaxie 500*.

SECRET NAME

★★★★★

(Kranky, 1999)

"The light it burns your skin/In a language you don't understand": no Low song dances closer to the mystical edge than *Two Step*.

Elsewhere on their beautiful fourth album, the sweetly stupefied *Starfire* ("I'll load the back and you can drive") showed Low could write a parallel-universe hit – improbably facilitated by working with Steve Albini.



THINGS WE LOST IN THE FIRE

★★★★

(Kranky, 2001)



Their second recording with Albini, this album is almost lushly adorned with brass and strings. There's no loss of strangeness on *Sunflower* or *Dinosaur Act*, though, while Parker's *Embrace* and *In Metal* are cosmic additions to the small canon of poignant, visceral songs about childbirth and motherhood.

THE GREAT DESTROYER

★★★★★

(Sub Pop, 2005)



Robert Plant covered the ominous *Monkey* on his *Band Of Joy* record from 2010 – an indication of Low's move towards a heavier sound. Maybe it was because it was their first record for Sub Pop or with Dave Fridmann; maybe it was just an expression of the band's turbulent internal workings at the time.

DRUMS AND GUNS

★★★★★

(Sub Pop, 2007)



Tapping into the febrile geopolitical climate of the Iraq War and George W Bush-era America, Low's fierce, fractured eighth album anticipated *Double Negative*'s last-ditch transmissions from a degraded planet. With the guitar stripped out and disintegration loops drilled in, it's Low putting barbed wire around their comfort zone. Martial bliss.

DOUBLE NEGATIVE

★★★★★

(Sub Pop, 2018)

Twenty-five years into their career, Low made their boldest record to date, a collection of songs that almost buckled and blackened while they played. "It's not the end/It's just the end of hope," sang Sparhawk on *Dancing And Fire*, which proved a crowd-pleasing sentiment. Made for these times.



he was the Antichrist; Sally would shortly leave the band. Sparhawk says: "We'd done *The Great Destroyer* with Dave Fridmann and we'd kind of got a feeling of, 'This guy really likes to go more extreme,' so coming into *Drums And Guns* we were, like, 'Let's take the lid off this and see if we can do something different.' Again, meanwhile, I was losing my mind. Completely head on fire doing *Drums And Guns*."

S PARHAWK IS, HE SAYS, "A LITTLE raw" today – he is sporadically gripped by nausea, shutting his eyes until it passes. Sitting in a darkened room, his long hair lending him the incongruous air of Robert Plant or a charismatic commune leader, Sparhawk is recalling a recent conversation with Sally. He lives two hours away in Minneapolis – "an indescribable wasteland right now of post-police violence and racial discord," says Sparhawk sadly. As he repeats their discussion about music's healing power, he begins to weep. "If the math of the solar system is the math of the music system, then there's something going on here," he says, his voice rising and cracking. "We need to be using that, we need to be having ceremonies, we need to be making music that heals this world. We're not going to do it by arguing and we're not going to be doing it by killing each other." He wipes his eyes. "I'm sorry to go off like this in the middle of a question. I am trying, despite all my weaknesses and all my flaws, to try to send this stuff to try and tip this universe a little bit towards the positive. I'm just trying not to screw that up."

He steadies himself. "This is good emotion," he says. "This is acknowledging truth."

Sparhawk is forthright in describing the effect his breakdown had on him. "It sucks. It makes people around me uncomfortable sometimes and I don't want to do that. I don't like beating myself up all the time and I don't like having psychosomatic reactions every time something gets heavy or I start having to talk about anything. Since then, it's been really difficult, a really step-by-step flawed process of trying to recover and not get that bad again. I'm glad I have music, I'm glad I have a creative place to process those things – I think it's been really vital to any sense of recovery or any sense of survival. But I'd gladly pass it all."

Did they ever think it was best they stop being Low? "Even though he was really a little ungrounded, he never lost his focus or his ambition for the band," says Parker. "Maybe you couldn't talk to Alan on that day, but you could talk to me. For the most part he's so dedicated to it, he loves it so



Midwestern gothic: Mimi and Alan, Duluth, 2021; (above, from left) Sparhawk and Parker with *The Invisible Way* producer Jeff Tweedy at Wilco's Loft studio, Chicago, 2013; Alan with son Cyrus during 2010's *C'mon* sessions; Parker and Sparhawk at the altar, St David's Historic Sanctuary, Austin, TX, March 13, 2018.

“SINCE MY BREAKDOWN, IT’S BEEN A PROCESS OF TRYING TO RECOVER AND NOT GET THAT BAD AGAIN. I’M GLAD I HAVE MUSIC.” ALAN SPARHAWK

much and yeah, he’s definitely kept this band going all these years. My personality is such that I tend to bring a calmness to it but it’s his energy, and it’s his focus that really pushes us along. And at the time it was really stressful, it was really hard but he was not ever at the point where he stopped.” She laughs. “Which is kind of crazy.”

“ALL NIGHT/YOU FOUGHT THE ADVERSARY/IT WAS NO ordinary fight,” Low sing on *Hey What’s* wonderful prog spiritual All Night. Sparhawk identifies the adversary as “likely yourself – or the draw within you to pull away from a righteous place”. He might have joked their songs are “easier than you’d think”, but their continued existence feels like the opposite, a forward march through difficult terrain.

“The first album we did was probably 24 hours of work,” says

Sparhawk. “The second one we did in a week. It was already pretty forward thinking for us even to be in the studio, so setting up and playing our songs and then overdubbing the vocals, that was new to us. And now new to us is running the vocals through a vocoder and on to a grid to get triggered by a drum machine and then we re-pitch it through something else and you get something different. That’s the frontier now. It’s a good struggle.”

“Every record we’ve ever made, at some point we’d scratch our head and say, ‘What is this? Is this anything?’” says Parker. “By the time we’re done with it, you hope you’ve figured it out and you’re at a place you want to be. And that’s kind of what happened this time.”

After all those words that have labelled Low down the years – slowcore, Mormon, married, quiet – she hits upon the one that fits best. “It’s miraculous.”



READING 88's PISS-BOTTLE APOCALYPSE

Out of sync with the times and changing audience demands, it was the twilight of Berkshire's venerable National Rock Festival. But its death-throes were a horrorshow of mud, blood and beer.

When Saturday's Rock Night included **BONNIE TYLER**, **MEAT LOAF** and **STARSHIP**, a furious army of headbangers and chaos-lovers responded by pelting the stage with projectiles filled with urine. "It was a non-stop aerial assault," shudder the survivors. "They broke Meat Loaf's nose..."

Interviews by **LOIS WILSON** • Portrait by **DEREK RIDGERS**



Mick Box: Reading's thing was, if you didn't like an act, you peed in an R Whites lemonade bottle and lobbed it at the stage. It was expected, really.

Miles Hunt: Reading '88 was not only the first festival I played with the band, but it was the first festival I had been to. I had no idea what to expect. We hit the stage on the Friday, the adrenalin was up, and the bottles started flying.

MB: Reading was supposed to be a hard rock festival at that time. Iron Maiden had headlined Donington the week before. Kiss and Megadeth were also on the bill. But that year at Reading you had a Friday given over to 'alternative' bands and then the Saturday there was Uriah Heep, but then you also had Starship, Meat Loaf and Bonnie Tyler.

Vince Power: Harold Pendleton ran Reading then. He'd founded The Marquee in London in 1958 and the National Jazz and Blues festival in '61 and that became Reading Rocks in ➤



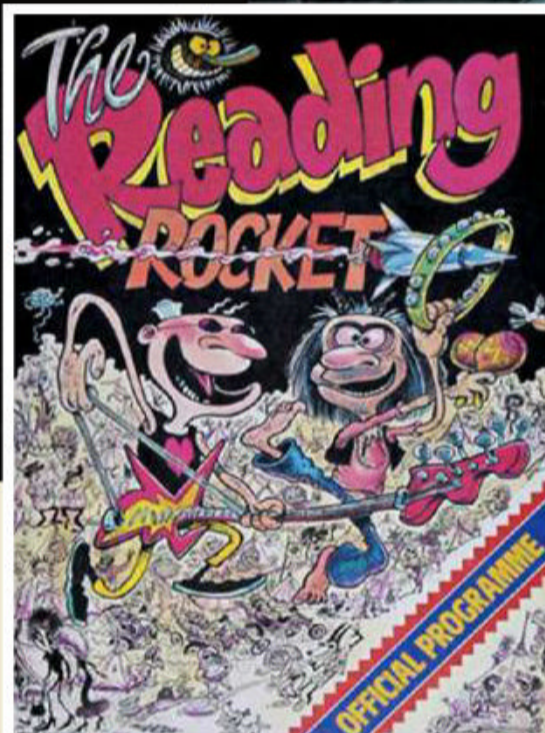
No sleep 'til Agincourt:
how music festivals used
to be – sending a dispatch
from the Reading frontline,
August 26, 1988.





No way to treat a lady: (clockwise from left) super trooper Bonnie Tyler stands firm at Reading '88; crew clear the stage of bottles and other items following Tyler's performance; Uriah Heep's Mick Box (left) and Bernie Shaw rock on; the Reading Rocket 1988 festival programme.

"BONNIE TYLER WAS AS HARD AS NAILS." Paul Blinkhorn



the '70s. It had been a big deal, but by '88 it had lost its way. The audience was mainly Hells Angels and biker types, nothing wrong with them, but the booking was wrong.

Peter Coyne: We'd played Reading '87 and that was fine, but Reading '88 was a festival in transition. We played the 'alternative day' with The Wonder Stuff, Ramones and Iggy Pop headlining and it was like the Battle of Agincourt, but instead of the sky being black with arrows raining down, it was glass and plastic bottles filled with piss, cans of beer, lumps of turf and clods of earth and whatever missiles the drunken crowd could muster.

Paul Blinkhorn: There was a knack to throwing bottles. Empty bottles flopped, half full ones did a slow loopy spin and full ones went up dead straight, or spun really fast. If they left the tops off the audience would get most of it. A full two litre plastic bottle of piss is heavy – my crew-buddy got one square in the nuts and went down like he'd been shot. It got one of the biggest cheers of the weekend.

MH: Because you're so fired up, you're working at a faster speed so any incidents that occur that you wish weren't occurring go into almost slow motion, and that was what it was like with the bottles. They were coming towards you in slow motion, so somehow you were able to dodge them, and we left the stage pretty much unscathed. I've seen footage of our performance on YouTube since and I'm definitely over-compensating with the cockiness. At one point I'm going, "We've got loads of the fucking stuff backstage. You must have paid for that shit sucker." Embarrassing.

PC: We opened our set with I Want Everything [chorus: "I want everything and I want it now"]

and it was a non-stop aerial assault. I was wearing an all-white suit, not sure why, and I managed to keep it clean. At the end I remember shouting: "All you dirty hippies out there, this is still the Persil white you only get with The Godfathers!" By then we were actually quite enjoying it.

PB: Friday was bad but Saturday, I'd never seen anything like it before or since. Bonnie Tyler came on and they were throwing plastic beer glasses filled with shit scooped out of the overflowing bogs by the side of the stage.

Bonnie Tyler: It wasn't a very nice experience, to be honest... oh my god... it was horrendous, just people throwing bottles and my band just ran off the stage and I said, "Stay here boys, they're not a good shot."

Chuck Burghi: Me and Meat's guitarist Bobby Kulick were watching from the side of the stage and she was getting pelted with mud balls. We looked at each other and I said, "This might get ugly."

PB: Bonnie was an absolute trooper. She stood there, looked them in the eye and did not give an inch. Afterwards she was backstage swigging wine straight out the bottle, with a proper thousand-yard stare. She was as hard as nails. We had to mop the stage down afterwards, and one of her crew was scraping noodles off the backline. It was like mopping down a farmyard.

MB: We followed Bonnie Tyler on, went straight into it, no subtlety, just rocked, didn't give anyone time to breathe. Then Meat Loaf went on, got bottled and walked off after one song.

CB: It started with a few small bottles and then someone threw a crushed can so it was like a metal frisbee and it hit my cymbal and fell on the

drums. The spotlights were coming in from out in the fields and were blinding so you couldn't see anything until it hit you or the stage. I was just thinking, this could take out an eye or some teeth. Meat was so pissed. But we had a pow wow and he said, "Let's go back on and finish this." So we went back on and he announced to the crowd: "If you see anybody throwing anything at us, kick his ass." So the crowd started up again.

MB: Our bassist Trevor Bolder had given him a pep talk and said, "If you don't go back on the press will kill you." So he went back on, started doing one of his big ballads, head back, eyes shut, and within 30 seconds a bottle hit him straight on the nose and he went down.

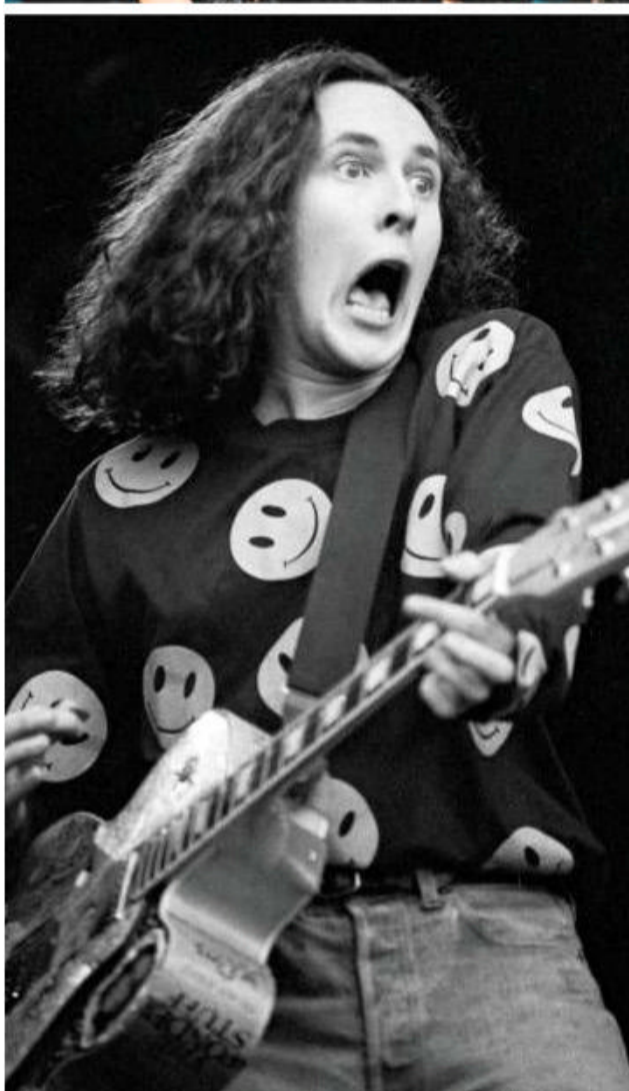
PB: He was out cold, and there was blood everywhere. Me and my crew-mate went out there to try and fend off the bottles that were coming in while his management got him off. He came back a bit later, launched into a tirade, got a load of bottles back in return, gave the crowd the finger and stomped off.

BT: They broke Meat Loaf's nose... and the audience were going, "Bonnie, Bonnie come back" because he'd bugged off. He only did, like, three songs and said, "I'm not staying here to be abused."

CB: We were going to Meat, "What about the show?" And he was, "That's it, we're leaving." We got on the tour bus and were off.

MB: We thought the whole thing was very funny, but it wasn't for the promoters, of course.

PB: It was very noticeable that the Yanks hated the bottling whereas most of the British bands thought it was a laugh. On the Sunday John Otway's manager got us to collect bin bags of



DRAMATIS PERSONAE



● Mick Box: Uriah Heep guitarist



● Bonnie Tyler: solo star



● Chuck Burghi: Meat Loaf drummer



● Vince Power: founder of the Mean Fiddler organisation



● Peter Coyne: singer, The Godfathers



● Miles Hunt: The Wonder Stuff frontman



● Paul Blinkhorn: festival stage crew, TV archaeologist



● Daveid Phillips: Mean Fiddler booker



● Peter Hook, New Order bassist



Bottled out of hell: (clockwise) Meat Loaf, shortly before the fall, August 27, 1988; the festival-goers regroup and reload for the next assault; The Wonder Stuff's Miles Hunt orders more free beer; Uriah Heep, the view from the trenches.



empty bottles from the pit and at a given signal we bottled him from both wings of the stage and the crowd all cheerily joined in.

VP: I was running the Powerhaus in Islington and the Mean Fiddler in Harlesden, and then I got a call from the Pendleton office. Were we interested in getting involved? We'd never booked a festival before but we knew we could do it, we were excited at the prospect. We struck a deal. Mean Fiddler would book the festival and own 50 per cent of it.

Daveid Phillips: We met the Pendletons and there couldn't have been a bigger clash in our personalities and background. They were really stuffy, at one point Harold stood up and said, "You're bloody communists." Vince shrugged, "I've been called worse." We then systematically got rid of the old ways, from the outdated 'trumpet on the chair' logo to the word 'rocks' in the title to the people who had been working there for 20 years in their Motörhead T-shirts who thought it was OK to be rude to everyone and call girls 'chicks'.

It was a battle all the way. I remember one phone call when they said, "There's a band on the bill that are too offensive, we can't have them." Butthole Surfers? No, Gaye Bykers On Acid. "Is it the acid bit? The gay bit?" It was unbelievable.

VP: Soon as the deal was done, Daveid and I started going to European

festivals to see how they did it. They had better stage set-ups, decent toilets, vegetarian food.

DP: They'd also have bands like New Order and The Cure on a stage with Joe Jackson and no one batted an eyelid. I liked New Order, Blue Monday 1988 had just been in the charts again and they'd just had a Number 1 with *Technique*. They knew what was required of a festival set, so we got them to headline the first night in 1989. It set the benchmark of what we wanted to achieve.

VP: I went up to Manchester and I sat round the table with Rob [Gretton, manager] and he said, "What makes you think you can make Reading a success?" I said, "I can give you 100 grand," and he said, "OK then."

Peter Hook: Reading came off the back of our biggest dates in America, we were playing to 30,000 people, and playing really well. This was despite not getting on at all and nearing our end. There was reluctance to do Reading from some members, Bernard was desperate to work with other people, but the money was a solace.

PB: New Order had the first barrel-lasers used at a UK festival and we spent the Thursday night helping the lighting crew hang and test them. We finished about 3am and a cheer went up. We swung a spotlight into the area and there was a few hundred acid-heads there going bonkers and demanding an encore.

DP: I remember sitting on the top of the PA on the first day and looking out and suddenly there were all these clouds of dust. They'd opened the gates and the kids were running across the field and they were hanging on to the barrier at the front and suddenly the field was full and we'd sold out. Gaye Bykers came on and it went mental. You then got Spacemen 3, My Bloody Valentine, Tackhead, Swans, Sugarcubes, New Order. It was overwhelming.

PH: I watched Jimi Hendrix at Monterey a few days before and saw him set fire to his guitar and I thought, "Maybe I'll do that and that will show the band how hurt I am and how bad I feel about us splitting up." On the night it was windy and I was spraying the lighter fluid and fuck me, it wouldn't light. I was fucking miserable but the audience had an amazing time and we rescued Reading. We were heroes.

PB: By 1990 it was utterly rammed and the audience was noticeably younger. That's when the kids who'd just finished their exams started to appear. You started getting Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall backstage too.

DP: It was the beginning of what people think of the festival experience. We changed the cultural landscape.

MB: After '88, it was obvious that the whole festival dynamic had to change. It was a case of cut your losses and get new people in. It became a very different kind of festival from then on. **M**

Bonnie Tyler interview from The Cambridge Union Society 2015.

Uriah Heep's Every Day Rocks vinyl box set is released in September. For more info on Reading and beyond, see www.ukrockfestivals.com



♠ GHOSTS ♣

BOB DYLAN and the '80s: a match made in hell? That's how it seemed as successive albums mangled the muse. But as a new Bootleg Series release reveals, and his collaborators recall, there were riches along with the reverb – even if the singer was often flying blind. “It was a matter of survival,” discovers **DAVID FRICKE**.

“**M**Y DIFFICULTY IN MAKING A RECORD,” BOB Dylan said in a low, rattling monotone, sitting by the rooftop pool of a Los Angeles hotel one evening in the fall of 1985, “is that when I record something in the studio, it never sounds anything like it when I get the tapes back. Whatever live sound I’m working on, it always gets lost in the machines.”

Dylan almost seemed to disappear himself as he spoke, receding into the black leather jacket draped over his shoulders and the darkening sky behind him. “Years ago, I could go in, do it and it would translate onto tape,” he went on between swigs from a bottle of Heineken and slow drags on a Kool cigarette. “It gets so cleaned up today that anything wrong you do doesn’t get onto the tape.

“And my stuff,” Dylan added curtly, “is based on wrong things.”

That year, the singer, 44, seemed to be everywhere at once: visible, industrious, even willing to play the pop star. His latest album, *Empire Burlesque*, released in June, was Dylan’s third studio album in five years, a work rate that included tours for 1981’s *Shot Of Love* and 1983’s *Infidels* – the latter co-produced with a younger friend and fan, singer-guitarist Mark Knopfler of Dire Straits. A month later, Dylan closed the Philadelphia end of Live Aid, then played with a new backing band, Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers, at the inaugural Farm Aid in September. And in November, Dylan issued his first box set, the career-spanning *Biograph*, attending a New York gala for the release where he mingled with David Bowie, Billy Joel and Iggy Pop. “I’m always accused of not being helpful,” Dylan cracked that night in LA.

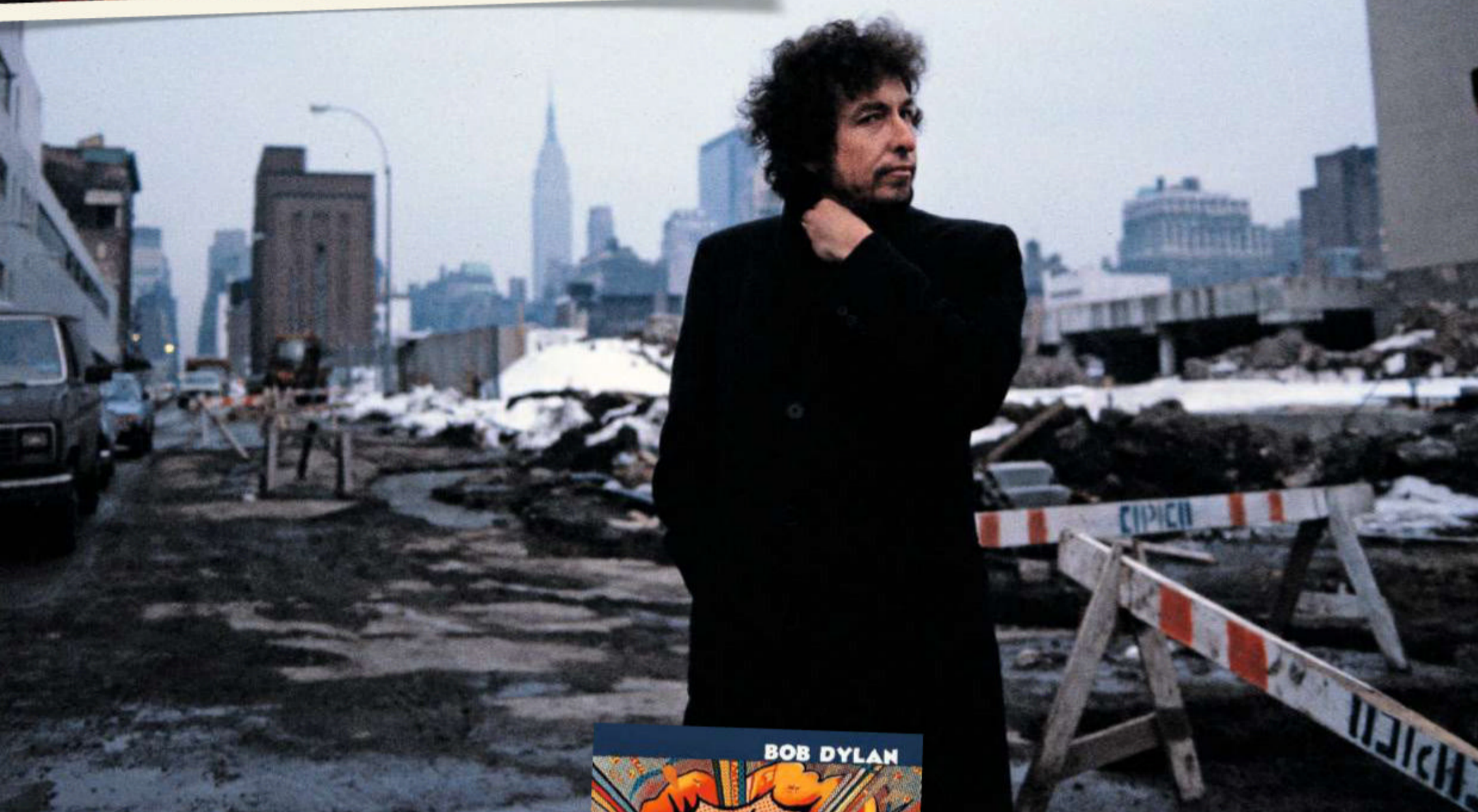
Dylan was also in his first, sustained cold spell, critically and commercially, since he was a protest singer. *Shot Of Love* – a mixed bag of sermon and country barroom signalling Dylan’s gradual emergence from evangelical Christianity – and *Empire Burlesque*, a startling turn to hyper-pop gloss, sold poorly, peaking outside the Top 30. *Infidels* – featuring Knopfler and ex-Rolling Stone Mick Taylor on guitars with Jamaica’s premier rhythm section, drummer Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, in the pocket – went gold but only got to Number 20, lower than the 1973 off-cuts mess, *Dylan*. ➤

Ken Regan/Camera 5





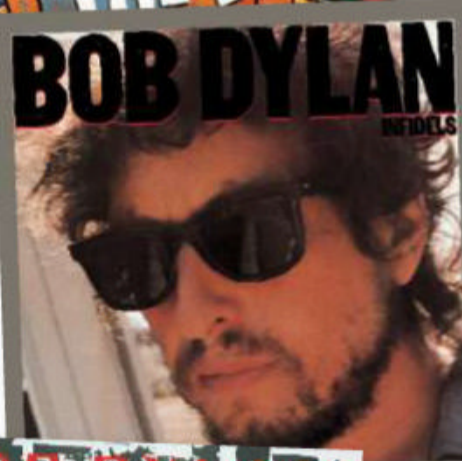
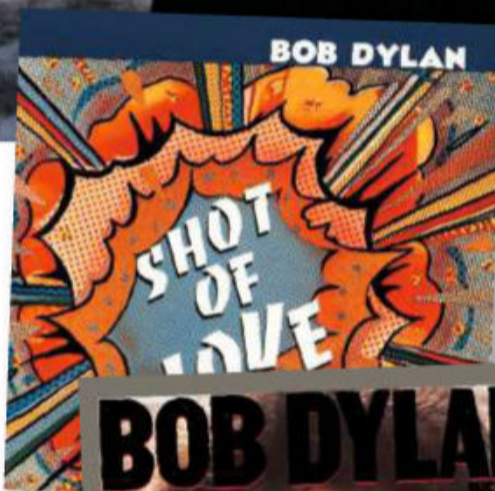
Not quite spring time in New York: Dylan in the Big Apple, 1983; (left) on-stage at the Warfield Theatre, San Francisco, November 1980; (right, from top) Sly and Robbie; Mark Knopfler; (insets below) controversial '80s albums.



◀ To varying degrees, Dylan's first albums of the '80s were doomed to disappoint, binding his loyalty to folk-blues forms and impulsive genius as a vocalist and bandleader to an unbending modernism and futile hit-radio outreach that stranded some of his best writing in a decade – the honky-tonk affection in *Shot Of Love*'s Heart Of Mine; the *Infidels* grenades License To Kill and I And I; the *Empire* love song Emotionally Yours – in gated reverb and overwhelming production. The rotating session crews were mostly veteran associates – bassist Tim Drummond; drummer Jim Keltner; Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood – and energised disciples like pianist Benmont Tench and guitarist Mike Campbell of the Heartbreakers.

But Dylan mixed *Infidels* without Knopfler, using a British engineer, Ian Taylor, whose most recent credit was The Cars' Shake It Up. Mick Taylor (no relation) says Knopfler's rough board mixes were better, citing one song, Man Of Peace. On the album, Taylor says, "it didn't sound the way I remember playing it."

Then Dylan completed *Empire Burlesque* with Arthur Baker, a hip-hop producer on a hot streak with acts including Afrika Bambaataa, New Edition and New Order. "It was a label thing," admits Baker, who had recently done a series of dancefloor remixes for another Colum-



bia artist, Bruce Springsteen. "It wasn't like Bob heard my remix of Dancing In The Dark and said, 'Yeah, I want Arthur to finish the record.'"

It was an unprecedented crossroads: the preeminent singer-songwriter of his age on the outside looking in, struggling to connect in a new mainstream of corporate politics and emotionally distant technology. Dylan professed not to care. "I never went into it as a business," he said of music and songwriting in 1984. "I went into it as a matter of survival."

Dylan put it another way, talking to Rolling Stone during a mixing session for *Empire Burlesque*: "What do I know about modern? I still listen to Charley Patton records."

IN FACT, HE CARED A LOT. *SPRINGTIME* In New York, the 16th volume in Dylan's *Bootleg Series* of forensic studio and concert anthologies, peels back the dated veneer and received wisdom of his early '80s to reveal – across 57 alternate takes, then-unissued songs and quixotic covers in the 5-CD edition – a decisive, creative momentum barely hinted at on the LPs. You also hear a collaborative searching, grounded in Dylan's unspoken



“It gets so cleaned up today that anything wrong you do doesn’t get onto the tape. And my stuff is based on wrong things.” BOB DYLAN

trust in his sidemen and recalling, in a helter-skelter way, his Basement Tapes summer with The Band and the simple caught-on-the-floor eloquence of 1967’s *John Wesley Harding* and 1969’s *Nashville Skyline*.

And there is a vocal constancy: the fire and balm of the black, female chorales that Dylan brought over from the rock-circus sound of 1978’s *Street-Legal* and the literal church of 1979’s *Slow Train Coming* and 1980’s *Saved*. The singers – who included Clydie King from session trio the Blackberries; Queen Esther Marrow, a Duke Ellington discovery who sang at civil rights actions with Dr Martin Luther King, Jr; and Carolyn Dennis, part of Stevie Wonder’s ’70s troupe Wonderlove – were closer to Dylan than most people knew. He reportedly had an affair with King and was secretly married to Dennis in the late ’80s. (They divorced in 1992.)

Baker says that when he recorded vocals with Dylan for *Empire Burlesque*, “He wanted to sing lead while they were doing back-grounds – on the same microphone. I would explain to him, ‘If they

mess up or you mess up, you have to do it again.’ The technical process – he was not that savvy,” Baker notes. “Or he was messing with me. I think half of it was messing.”

But Dylan was serious about his instincts. “His songs weren’t complex, but you had to watch him,” says guitarist Danny Kortchmar, who played on *Shot Of Love* and appears on *Springtime In New York*, firing crisp blues and funk licks in an outtake romp through *Mystery Train* and the Dylan rarity, *Need A Woman*. “If he wanted a solo, he’d just barely look at me and nod. And you’d jump in and play. He was looking for authenticity of emotion and performance: ‘Hit it, don’t think about it.’”

“We didn’t rehearse the songs,” Taylor says of *Infidels*. But he points to his guitar break in the ballad *Sweetheart Like You* as an example of Dylan’s power of suggestion. “He was very specific about how the solo should start. It wasn’t about the sound he wanted but the first few notes. He wanted the guitar solo at the end, the last thing you hear. So he wanted it to embellish the spirit of the song.”

Previous reissues have touched on this era. *Biograph* included *Caribbean Wind*, a *Shot Of Love* orphan that never reached the sublime height of Dylan’s live readings in autumn 1980. The initial 1991 instalment of *The Bootleg Series* marked the first public sighting – with Dylan on piano and Knopfler playing acoustic guitar – of Blind Willie McTell, a fevered vision of Delta-blues sorcery and brutal Southern history that eluded Dylan’s satisfaction at the time but is now one of his most acclaimed and covered songs.

Springtime In New York – named after the heart of the set, two CDs of previously unissued material from the *Infidels* sessions at Manhattan’s Power Station in April and early May 1983 – is a broader, deeper account of a long-misunderstood turbulence. Rehearsals for a late-1980 tour and the spring ’81 work on *Shot Of Love* suggest a high old time: Dylan veering between Everly Brothers and Temptations songs, striking revivals from the canon (*To Ramona*) and ultimately sidelined gems (*Borrowed Time*; *Is It Worth It?*). The *Infidels* section exposes more of that album’s experimental drive in the electric, arguably definitive Blind Willie McTell and the evolutionary segue of *Too Late*, a song heard in same-day acoustic and band takes before Dylan’s revised attack in this set, 48 hours later, as the explosive *Foot Of Pride*.

“Bob had a habit of spontaneously starting a track,” recalls Dire Straits keyboard player and *Infidels* sideman Alan Clark. One day, he came back from a quick visit to the bathroom to find Dylan had

kicked into the electric Blind Willie McTell without him.

“He was already into the first verse – I didn’t even know what key it was in.” Clark tried a chord on his Hammond organ, “fed up the volume and took it from there.

“Afterwards,” he continues, “it was either Sly or Robbie who came over and said, ‘Man, that chord was

fantastic.’ It was actually a whole tone down from the key of the song. But it happened to work well in that moment. I got lucky.”

Springtime In New York concludes with a vibrant reappraisal of Dylan’s mood swings on *Empire Burlesque*, highlighting the young guns embedded in the production: Campbell, Tench and Heartbreakers bassist Howie Epstein; Lone Justice drummer Don Heffington. Among the extremes are the Springsteen-my-way blast of *When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky*, cut with E Streeters Steve Van Zandt on guitar and pianist Roy Bittan; and the December ’84 draft of *New Danville Girl*, the epic road-trip-and-gunfighter fantasia Dylan co-wrote with playwright Sam Shepard and released two years later as *Brownsville Girl*.

Steve Berkowitz, who co-produced *Springtime In New York* with Dylan’s manager Jeff Rosen and has worked on the entire *Bootleg Series*, says “what we discovered on these recordings is that – maybe like 1965, ’66 – Dylan is focused and free. He has songs written. He feels fine about changing them – major to minor, fast to slow, ➤

◀ extending verses. And when the red light goes on, he gives you his all.”

Of the official LPs, “*Shot Of Love* is the one,” says Tench, who also played on that album, his first session gig with Dylan. “It has a lot of variety in the grooves, and the songs can break your heart.” *Infidels* is “a masterpiece” with, he concedes, “a lot of reverb. But it sounds honest and true. *Empire Burlesque* is a curiosity – Bob is experimenting more than I’d ever heard him do.

“But the songs are all connected,” Tench adds. “Because the same guy wrote ’em down.”

TAYLOR WAS OUT OF THE STONES for almost a decade when he first met Dylan – in January 1982 at the Roxy in LA where the guitarist was playing reunion shows with another ex-employer, John Mayall. “Mario told me Bob was specifically coming down to have a listen to me,” Taylor says of Mario Maglieri, the club’s owner, who used to sneak the underage Taylor through the service entrance of his other Sunset Strip venue, the Whisky A Go Go, when Taylor was in Mayall’s late-’60s Bluesbreakers.

In a backstage room, Taylor and Dylan chatted and played guitars – “a couple of things in open tunings,” the former says. “Then he said, ‘I’m thinking of doing an album in New York, and I’d like you to play on it.’” By April 1983, after his tour with Mayall, Taylor was in New York to record with Dylan – who neglected to mention that Knopfler was co-producing and playing guitar as well. “I didn’t know about Mark,” Taylor says, “until I got there.”

Knopfler and Dylan also first met at the Roxy when Dire Straits played there in March 1979 on their debut US tour. They bonded immediately. By May, Knopfler was in Alabama, at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, playing lead guitar on *Slow Train Coming*. “I’ve always felt protective of Bob,” Knopfler told MOJO in 1996. “The first time I met him I felt like putting my arm around his shoulders... I think he’s always had a difficult life, being deified virtually since he was a kid.”

When I interviewed Knopfler in 1985 for a cover story in Rolling Stone, he said that as the producer of Dire Straits’ albums, “Ninety-five per cent of the time I like being the fearless leader. I just think that when you write a song and get it together, you want it done right.” For *Infidels*, though, “Because Bob had been at my house a few times to run down the stuff, it was usually easy to get something on tape. Because with Bob Dylan, he’s not necessarily going to be around to sing it more than two or three times.”

The alternate takes and abandoned tunes on *Springtime In New York* resurrect the *Infidels* Dylan actually made, minus the totally-’80s echo that seemed to push that dream combo to the back of the tape. “Usually it’s the drummer and the bass player that make the band,” Dylan said in a 1987 interview. On *Springtime*, the Jamaicans bring their twist on the space and empathy Dylan enjoyed with Rick Danko



ROUGH DIAMONDS

Five revelations from the five CDs of Bootleg 16, by DAVID FRICKE.

The Price Of Love

This jangling 1965 stomp by The Everly Brothers was one of two singles by the siblings that Dylan covered on May 1, 1981 as a good-time break from *Shot Of Love*. The other, a slow caress of the 1960 Top 10 ballad Let It Be Me, crept out as a European B-side. “It was such a joy to be there,” says Benmont Tench, who played on both.

Yes Sir, No Sir

Recorded on April 2, 1981, this dark, vigorous rocker would have been a great higher-gear addition to *Shot Of Love*. Dylan never played it again. Also cut that day: Fur Slippers, a sardonic blues suggestive of Little Feat around the campfire. Again, Dylan left it behind, but he got the ultimate compliment when B.B. King covered it in Mississippi grit in 1999.

Blind Willie McTell

“I play minimalist slide guitar,” Mick Taylor says of his role in this feral, electric magnificence from April 11, 1983, three weeks before the acoustic take first issued in 1991. “I wouldn’t call it blues playing – just little inflections, a call-response thing. A lot of people were surprised it wasn’t included. It was probably because Bob hadn’t decided how to present it.”

License To Kill (live)

“With this band, one thinks, Dylan could have set the world on fire again,” critic Paul Williams wrote of Dylan’s fire-breathing mini-set on Late Night With David Letterman – broadcast on March 22, 1984, the singer armed with the wiry aggression of Latino-punk trio the Plugz (see MOJO 325). He never played with them again. See YouTube for the whole, blazing enchilada including a hard-charging Jokerman and Sonny Boy Williamson’s Don’t Start Me Talking.

New Danville Girl

Benmont Tench likens the changes that led to Brownsville Girl on 1986’s *Knocked Out Loaded* (including the replacement of his and Mike Campbell’s parts) to Walt Whitman’s multiple editions of Leaves Of Grass. The poet “revised it again and again,” Tench says, “and sacrificed some powerful stuff.” Dylan’s Girls, in turn, “bring you to this emotional level in different ways.” To have one without the other “is to miss out on a great version of that song.”

and Levon Helm of The Band to wildly different settings: the slicing strut of Clean Cut Kid, an *Infidels* tryout of the *Empire Burlesque* track; the juke-joint crawl in Jimmy Reed’s Baby What You Want Me To Do; and the straight-arrow velocity of Julius And Ethel, Dylan’s oddly timed defence of the Cold War couple Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, 30 years after their executions, in Sing Sing, for espionage.

“Mark was planning on doing a lot of work afterwards,” including more of his own guitar overdubs, Clark says. “But he never got the chance. We had to go back on the road with Dire Straits. Then Bob went off and continued making the record in Los Angeles.”

“Bob said to me, ‘Can you stay and help me finish this?’” Taylor says. “I would have loved to, but I said, ‘I can’t, I’ve got a tour lined up with John Mayall.’ And Bob, being Bob, said, ‘Oh, you don’t really need to do that.’”

Dylan later explained the final *Infidels* – the reverb, his redone vocals, the altered running order that mystifyingly left Blind Willie McTell and Foot Of Pride on the shelf – this way: “Did you ever listen to an Eagles record?... Their songs are good, but every note is predictable. You know exactly what’s gonna be before it’s even there. And I started to sense some of that on *Infidels*, and I didn’t like it.”

In his 1992 Dylan study, Performing Artist, The Middle Years: 1974-1984, the late Paul Williams described the moody ennui of *Infidels*’ I And I as “a beautiful song, powerfully sung” but “marred” by a “melodramatic, heavily echoed” bass-drum pulse. “One part of him probably thinks this drum part sounds terrific,” Williams wrote. “Another part, in my opinion, cynically feels like he’s giving the record company and the public what they want.”

Dylan almost confessed as much to Rolling Stone’s Kurt Loder in a cover story after *Infidels*’ release, claiming he wanted to call it Surviving In A Ruthless World until “someone pointed out to me that the last bunch of albums I’d made all started with the letter ‘s’.” When Loder asked how Dylan felt about the latest studio technology compared to the one-and-done immediacy of records like 1964’s *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*, the singer said he was planning a return to basics:

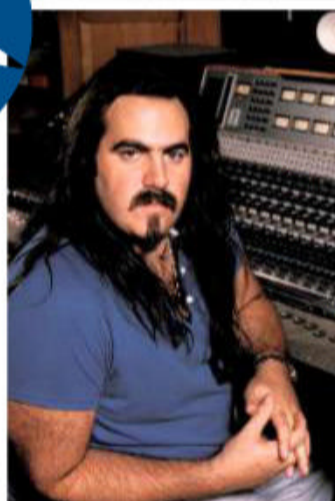
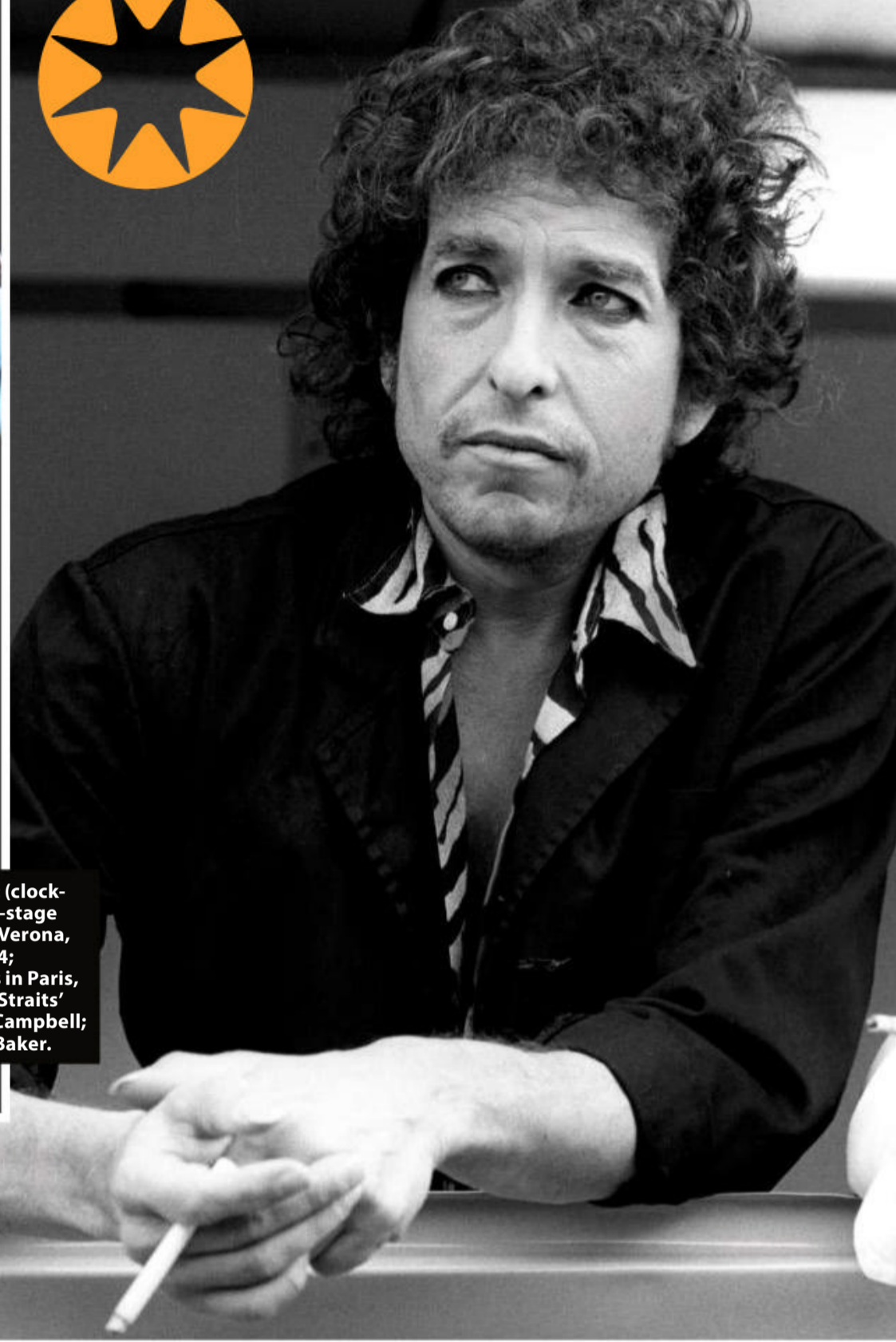
“I think my next album is probably just gonna be me and my guitar and harmonica. I’m not saying all of it will be that way. But I’m sure a few songs will be. I know they will be.”

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1985, ARTHUR Baker reported to the Power Station for his first day of work on *Empire Burlesque*. Dylan was in the middle of recording the hard-rock apocalypse When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky with Van Zandt, Bittan, Dunbar and Shakespeare – first as a power ballad, then revving up the tempo and arena-rock roar.

“After they cut it,” Baker recalls, “Bob said to me, ‘You know, I think it sounds too much like Springsteen.’ And I’m like, ‘You’re using his piano player and guitarist. I think it sounds good. But if you don’t want it to sound like



The middle years: (clockwise from left) on-stage with Mick Taylor, Verona, Italy, May 29, 1984; *Burlesque* dreams in Paris, July 1, 1984; Dire Straits' Alan Clark, Mike Campbell; producer Arthur Baker.



Springsteen, don't get Springsteen's musicians." The producer laughs. "That was our first interaction." Dylan ditched the tracks and, with Baker, redid the song in a controversial thunder of brass and synthesizer that included a friend of Baker's on guitar, Stu Kimball — a future member of Dylan's touring group in the 2000s.

In fact, Baker was a major Dylan fan; as a high-school student in Boston, he wrote a graduate paper on *The Poetry Of Bob Dylan*. Columbia Records didn't know that. "They wanted me to modernise him a bit," he says. "It was more like a fix-it job" with Baker recording vocal overdubs and remixing tracks that Dylan mostly recorded in LA in late 1984 and early '85.

"It wasn't a lot of preparation," Mike Campbell says of those sessions, represented on *Springtime In New York* by an early pass at the romantic eulogy I'll Remember You and a jubilant rocker, Straight A's In Love, that went directly to the cutting-room floor. "In that sense, it was very similar to the way I worked with my band," referring to Petty and the Heartbreakers. Dylan "had this

thing — just follow him. He knows where he's headed. Add to it the best you can.

"Like on New Danville Girl," which Campbell says came up at the end of his first week with Dylan. After Dylan played a tape of the track for the guitarist, "he turned around at the end and goes, 'What do you think?' I said, 'Well, it's kinda long.' He looked at me and said, 'Would you play on it anyway?'"

When Campbell put his overdub on the December 6, 1984 recording heard on *Springtime In New York*, every time Dylan sang the actor Gregory Peck's name — a running gag in the song — "I'd start laughing. You can tell he enjoyed himself writing it. I don't even know what it's about. I just got wrapped up in it. And it was fun."

Baker heard New Danville Girl at his first meeting with Dylan. "There was a boom box," he says, "a bunch of cassettes and he started playing me tracks." But the song never came up again. "I had nothing to say about what was on the album. The thing we really worked on together was his vocals. Bob did a lot of them. ➤

♠ “JESUS HAS ♣ A BÖNER!”

George Lois, the history of art and the story of the Jokerman video. By MICHAEL SIMMONS.

LARRY ‘RATSO’ SLOMAN was the embedded reporter with The Rolling Thunder Revue in 1975. His friend George Lois was an ebullient, audacious adman who also designed Esquire magazine’s iconic covers in the 1960s – including the arrow-pierced Muhammad Ali as the martyred St. Sebastian. But it was Lois’s work to free boxer Rubin ‘Hurricane’ Carter that brought him into Dylan’s realm. “Ratso organised a meeting between me and Bob Dylan, which was when I proposed he write a song and perform concerts to raise awareness for Rubin,” recalls the 90-year old Lois today.

By 1983, the success of MTV had made music videos *de rigueur*. The first Dylan promo for an *Infidels* track was for Sweetheart Like You, a dour effort directed by Mark Robinson with Dylan apparently serenading the cleaner in an empty club. Concert promoter Bill Graham – Dylan’s manager at the time – asked Sloman if George Lois would take on a second video for a track of their own choosing. “George agreed and takes this on like a Madison Avenue campaign,” Sloman recalls.

Picking Jokerman, Lois and Sloman brainstormed at the ad man’s office. Ratso: “George says, ‘We gotta take the lyrics and blow them up, put ‘em right in your fuckin’ face because he’s the greatest lyricist ever.’ Then we talked about the visuals. We wanted to impress how Dylan’s songs are as great as the greatest artworks from antiquity to the present day.” Lois, who spent every Sunday at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, says “It was a no-brainer. Bob Dylan is an iconic work of art in and of himself.”

They matched each line of the song to images ranging from Aztec and Greek sculpture to paintings by Bosch, Munch, Blake and Picasso. They animated the famous Milton Glaser poster of Dylan and superimposed the line “Shedding off one more layer of skin” over a montage of Dylan photos that covered his shapeshifting career. Over the line, “You rise up and say goodbye to no one,” they used Mantegna’s 15th century

Lamentation Of Christ, partly because, as Lois told Ratso, “If you look, Jesus has a boner!”

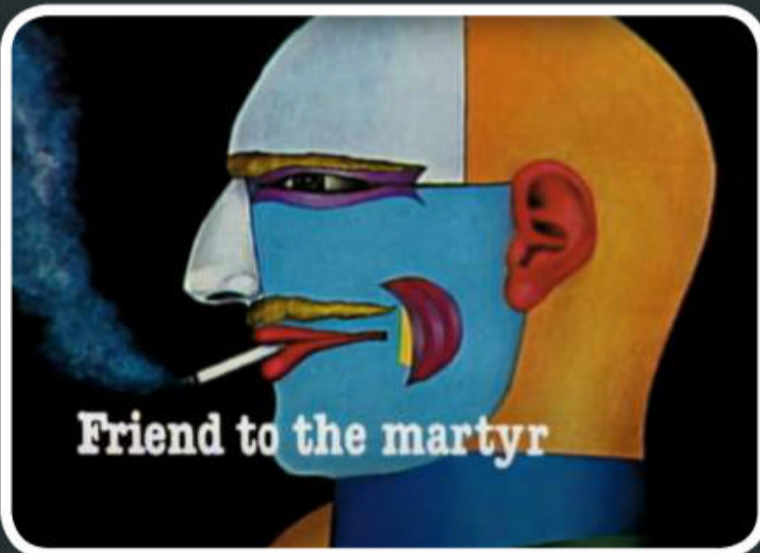
They also decided to shoot Dylan singing the choruses, but on the day of the filming there was a problem. After the first take, Lois pulled Sloman aside and said, “He’s not opening his eyes – you gotta get him to open his eyes!” So between each take, Sloman would gently ask Dylan to open his eyes when he sang. Aside from a few momentary glimpses, this proved fruitless. “Finally George says, ‘You gotta tell him to fuckin’ open his fuckin’ eyes.’ I go over and he knows what’s coming. And Bob goes, ‘I’m try-ing.’ He knew what he was doing ‘cos the last take – the final chorus – he starts teasing, squinting. Finally in the last fuckin’ image he opens his eyes and that baby blue charisma just flows! George and I were delighted – ‘Holy shit, we captured this guy’s essence!’”

Once it was edited, Dylan professed himself pleased with the video. But then

“George says, ‘We gotta take the lyrics and blow them up, put ‘em right in your fuckin’ face.’” RATSO SLOMAN

Sloman took a call from the singer. “He says, ‘I like the video but I don’t like me doin’ the chorus. Why don’t you come out to Malibu. We’ll get a handheld camera, we’ll go to the beach and you can shoot me doin’ the chorus.’ I call George and tell him...” But Lois was adamant – “Boring! My answer was, ‘No fucking way!’” – and the video was released with the original footage.

Later, Sloman visited Dylan while he was on tour in France and gave him the news that the video had become a sensation. “Bob started laughing and said, ‘Either I’m crazy or the world’s crazy.’”



The touring trouper: Dylan passes the time outside UB40's trailer at Slane Castle, Co. Meath, Ireland, July 8, 1984; (opposite page) stills from the Jokerman video, with statuary, Bosch, George Lois's work and making eye contact, at last.



"I'm hearing something really weird, so I turned the volume down. And it's Bob singing Like A Virgin." ARTHUR BAKER

◀ But the issue was not him being unhappy with the take. He was rewriting. It was about him finishing the song lyrically.

"If I had to do it over again," the producer says of *Empire Burlesque*, "I'd change a lot. I would have preferred it more stripped down.

But I was in the middle. The record label wanted it polished and '80s. And Bob..."

Baker pauses, then tells a story from one mixing session: "I'm hearing something really weird, so I turned the volume down. And it's Bob" — sitting at the console with Baker — "singing Like A Virgin. And he's like, 'Can't we do something like Prince or Madonna?' Yeah, he's taking the piss," the producer says. "On the other hand, I was working with tracks that, for the most part, were already cut."

The exception: *Empire Burlesque*'s purely-solo climax, Dark Eyes, which now closes *Springtime In New York* as well in a quietly stirring, alternate performance. In his 2004 memoir, *Chronicles, Volume One*, Dylan credited the producer with speaking up in the final hours: "Baker kept suggesting that we should have an acoustic song at the end of the record, that it would bring everything to the right conclusion." That night, at his hotel, Dylan passed a call girl in the hallway with "blue circles under her eyes, black eyeliner, dark eyes... She had a beautifulness, but not for this kind of world."

"The next day, he came in," Baker says, "and he played this song." Baker remembers two takes before he left to catch a train to Boston. It was only after *Chronicles* was published "that I realised he'd written it that night. That blew me away."

In the book, Dylan acknowledged that it was the first time he wrote a song at a producer's request. It was also "the right thing to do," he said. "It did complete the album."

all the big shows. I've had all the acclaim at one time or another."

When Duran Duran's 1982 hit *Hungry Like The Wolf* came over the hotel PA, Dylan did not hide his contempt. "The kids are getting a raw deal," he growled. "Nobody's telling them anything through music any more."

It sounded a lot like a retirement address but turned out to be more like *au revoir* to a music business that had changed more than he liked. For the rest of the 20th century, Dylan mostly lived with his music on the road, making studio albums with no apparent strategy, with intermittent success — 1989's *Oh Mercy*, 1997's *Time Out Of Mind* — until he finally did the obvious in the 21st: recording with his touring musicians and producing himself (as Jack Frost). "I don't have to go on other people's trips of who they think I am," Dylan remarked to *Rolling Stone* in 1987. "I feel like I'm a star, but I can shine for who I want to."

That included Knopfler. Despite the abrupt end of their working relationship over *Infidels*, Dylan and the guitarist remained friends and collaborators. A few years ago, Knopfler toured with Dylan as his support act and a special guest on guitar during the headliner's set. And in February 1986, three years after *Infidels*' release, Dylan and Knopfler kept running into each other as they both toured Australia. In Sydney, on a night off from Dire Straits' itinerary, Knopfler joined Dylan, Petty and the Heartbreakers on stage for their encores. A week later in Melbourne, Dylan played four songs with Dire Straits, including *Infidels*' License To Kill.

"Everything was fine by then," Clark says. "Mark was disappointed at the way it went down" with *Infidels*. "But quickly got over it." **M**

Springtime In New York: The Bootleg Series Vol. 16 (1980-1985) is released by Columbia/Legacy in multiple formats on September 17.

BY THE TIME I INTERVIEWED DYLAN BY THAT HOTEL pool in LA, *Empire Burlesque* had come and gone. "I've made all the difference I'm going to," Dylan stated firmly as the sunset, as if on cue, turned to night. "My place is secure, whatever it is. I'm not worried about having to do the next thing or keeping in step with the times. I've sold millions of records. I've done

Crumpled profs distilling visions of post-war science and society with found sound and epic synths, PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING are more Reith Lecture than pop group. After space and south Wales, their latest destination is Berlin. Is it one giant leap too far? “It’s brave, but is it wise?” they ask DAVID HUTCHEON.

Photography by **TOM OLDHAM**

THERE ARE NO VISUALS IN WALTER RUTTMANN’S FILM WOCHENENDE (Weekend), an experiment in audio collage made in Berlin in 1930, yet your mind fills in the gaps: monochrome images of men working with machines, illuminated by sparks; a whistle signals shift’s end; marching bands in town squares; kisses beneath the trees in the Tiergarten. Four minutes in, a young woman, fashionably dressed in cloche hat, short skirt and Mary Janes turns towards us. “Mach schon,” she exhorts. “Let’s go!”

That unknown *fräulein* is about to become a pop celebrity of sorts. “Berlin sounds so noisy then,” says J. Willgoose, Esq, of Public Service Broadcasting, whose fourth album, *Bright Magic*, is a mystical dive into the myths that obfuscate the reality of Germany’s capital city. “It’s fascinating to be transported back in time by *Wochenende* and hear these voices of everyday Berlin almost a century ago. It just felt right to use her to open *Im Licht*, just before the album explodes musically.”

MOJO and Willgoose meet by the Wall, under the watchful eye of the Stasi – in reality, a south London cafe, and we are harassed only by pigeons – to talk about Berlin, mythology and electricity. For security, we have both adopted fake names and the password is “Ouroboros”. “It is a bit like a snake eating its own tail,” he concedes. “An album about people who move to Berlin to write albums about why they moved to Berlin to write an album. Everybody has their own version of this city in their heads. What is my version of Berlin that has given it this status, this kudos... and can we piggyback on that?”

A DECADE AGO, THIS WOULD HAVE SEEMED UNLIKELY. HAVING TRIED AND FAILED to make his way with various indie bands, Willgoose went solo, “mucking about” with samples, accompanying them on synths and guitar, until hitting on the idea – a step beyond, say, Big Audio Dynamite’s snatches of Performance dialogue or Saint Etienne’s interstitials – of a concept album in which each song was based on a different public information film. He found receptive ears helming ➤

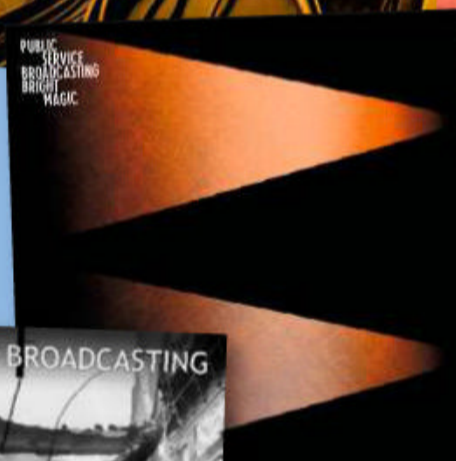
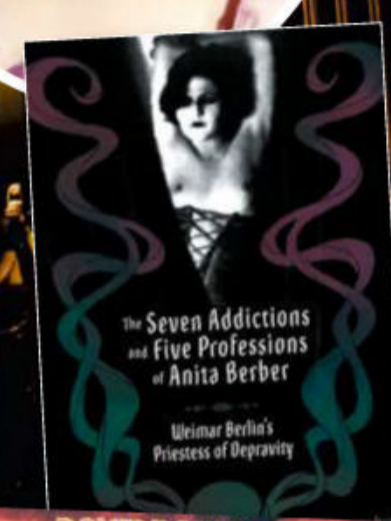
Tom Oldham





Do not adjust your sets: Public Service Broadcasting (from left) JF Abraham, J. Willgoose, Esq, Wigglesworth, Mr B, at Ermine Works, east London, July 8, 2021.

A giant leap: Public Service Broadcasting take *The Race For Space* to the stage, Hammersmith Apollo, 2017; (insets, from top) Marlene Dietrich, Anita Berber, David Bowie, new PSB album *Bright Magic* and earlier EP *The War Room*.



“I WROTE A LINE YEARS AGO THAT HAS HAUNTED US EVER SINCE: ‘TEACHING THE LESSONS OF THE PAST THROUGH THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE.’”

J. Willgoose, Esq

◀ the British Film Institute and StudioCanal archives, and Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) was born.

“I wrote a line years ago that has haunted us ever since,” he says. “‘Teaching the lessons of the past through the music of the future,’ but it was tongue-in-cheek. Our look was that of the crumpled old left-wing intelligentsia, vaguely disorganised university professors who always wear brown corduroys, but I realised I could do more with it than just be slightly arch. I could use the samples to build a narrative, and if you do that it’s more likely to have an emotional hook that people can grab on to.”

A second member, Wrigglesworth, joined – “Some tracks just sounded better with live drums” – and the EP *The War Room* and LP *Inform-Educate-Entertain* were released in 2012-13, with songs about the Blitz, Second World War fighter planes, mountaineers and mail trains. Its most affecting track, *Lit Up*, features the BBC’s Thomas Woodroffe, in his cups and describing George VI’s Coronation Review of the Fleet in 1937; the corporation’s apology for his performance giving the world the phrase “tired and emotional”. It’s a fine line, however, between celebrating humanity and what today might be called “imperial nostalgia”.

“It’s important not to just hand these myths over to the nationalists,” Willgoose counters. “There are many things to be unapologetically proud of in what Britain did in the War, but it was about trying to express that without being jingoistic, the irony of creativity begetting destruction, or of the triumph of human endeavour on Everest, balancing the lofty poetry of the narrative

with the grind that got them there.”

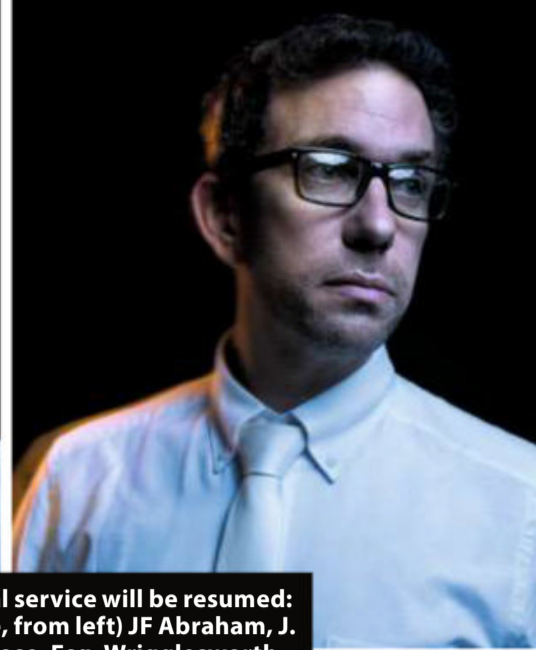
Another musical celebration of human endeavour in *excelsis*, *The Race For Space* followed. Its evocation of American and Soviet scientists locked in astronautical one-upmanship took PSB to new levels across the board, the album launching at Leicester’s National Space Centre in February 2015 and reprised during the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in July 2019, the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. The band grew

in number, but the long-running success of *Race...* undoubtedly overshadowed its successor, *Every Valley*, the story of the miners of south Wales, once feted as “the kings of the underworld” in Richard Burton’s words, then “the enemy within” in Margaret Thatcher’s. Yet, even before that album, Willgoose had set his eyes on another horizon.

“When we signed with our managers, playing Berlin was one of my ambitions. The first gig we did there was a shocker. I muffed up [*Inform-Educate-Entertain* track] *Roygbiv* so badly, Wrigglesworth fell off his stool laughing. Yet it felt cool, and Berlin still has the air of a great place. With a city that rich in history, it’s easy to find resonances that chime with you, but I think I, we, have an inbuilt desire to push back against the obvious – the Wall, the Stasi, JFK’s speech – all the stuff I’m sure people are tired of hearing about. I went to see the expressionistic films of the Novembergruppe at the Berlinische Galerie and I remember getting back in the van and saying: ‘Yeah, I’ve got it, I know what I’m doing now.’”

Wait. You were on tour, in Berlin, and you went to a gallery? That’s not very rock’n’roll.

“Well, my experience of Berlin may have been different to Bowie’s. I was 38. I had a pregnant wife and a dog.”



Normal service will be resumed: (above, from left) JF Abraham, J. Willgoose, Esq., Wigglesworth, Mr B; (below) Willgoose in his London studio, 2015; (left) on-stage in Manchester, 2013.



HEY! HO! MACH SCHON!

The frightfully
enlightening
world of
Public Service
Broadcasting,
in albums, by
David Hutcheon.

INFORM-EDUCATE-
ENTERTAIN

★★★★

(Test Card Recordings, 2013)



As the sun set
on the Empire,
enter PSB.
It lacks the
ambition of
later concepts,
but you still get John Grierson
reciting Auden, Leslie Howard
dreaming up the Spitfire,
Edmund Hillary conquering
Everest, and a tired and
emotional Thomas Woodrooffe.

THE RACE FOR SPACE

★★★★★

(Test Card Recordings, 2015)



Audaciously
focusing on
the humanity
behind Cold War
technology, PSB
make you care
whether or not Apollo 8 orbits
the moon, marvel at the bravery
of Yuri Gagarin and Valentina
Tereshkova and choke over
Apollo 1. Stay or go? Go!

EVERY VALLEY

★★★★★

(Play It Again Sam, 2017)



Using the
decline of
the Welsh
coal mines to
represent the
abandonment
and neglect of people who
fail to pay their way under the
relentless march of progress,
Willgoose et al remind us
that the world turns not on
commodity but community.



FOR A MOMENT, THERE IS A CRACK in the PSB facade, a glimpse into otherwise private lives. Willgoose wears a wedding ring, owns a dog, studied English, but their ludicrous pseudonyms and aversion to inquisitiveness are sticks with which the band are often beaten. “It’s too easy to know everything about a band these days,” he says, “to put it out there so everyone knows what you had for breakfast. It doesn’t feel like something the people we write about on the album, like Marlene Dietrich and Anita Berber, would have done. They understood the importance of the self-made image.”

So, J. Willgoose, Esq, what is it that attracted you to self-mythologisers and a city that keeps reinventing itself?

“Dietrich’s one of the people who give Berlin its air of cool, but I was fascinated by the ruthless way she built her own image. We’re certainly not masters of that. She, and Bowie and Berber, understood the power that comes from controlling your own myth. They created stories that don’t have to be true, but they have control over them. With Berber, it is more difficult, she ended up being consumed by her persona.”

A dancer, actress and writer of the poem Kokain, which inspired the PSB track Gib Mir Das Licht, Berber is best summed up in the title of Mel Gordon’s biography: *The Seven Addictions And Five Professions Of Weimar Berlin’s Priestess Of Depravity*. What she had for breakfast is nobody’s business.

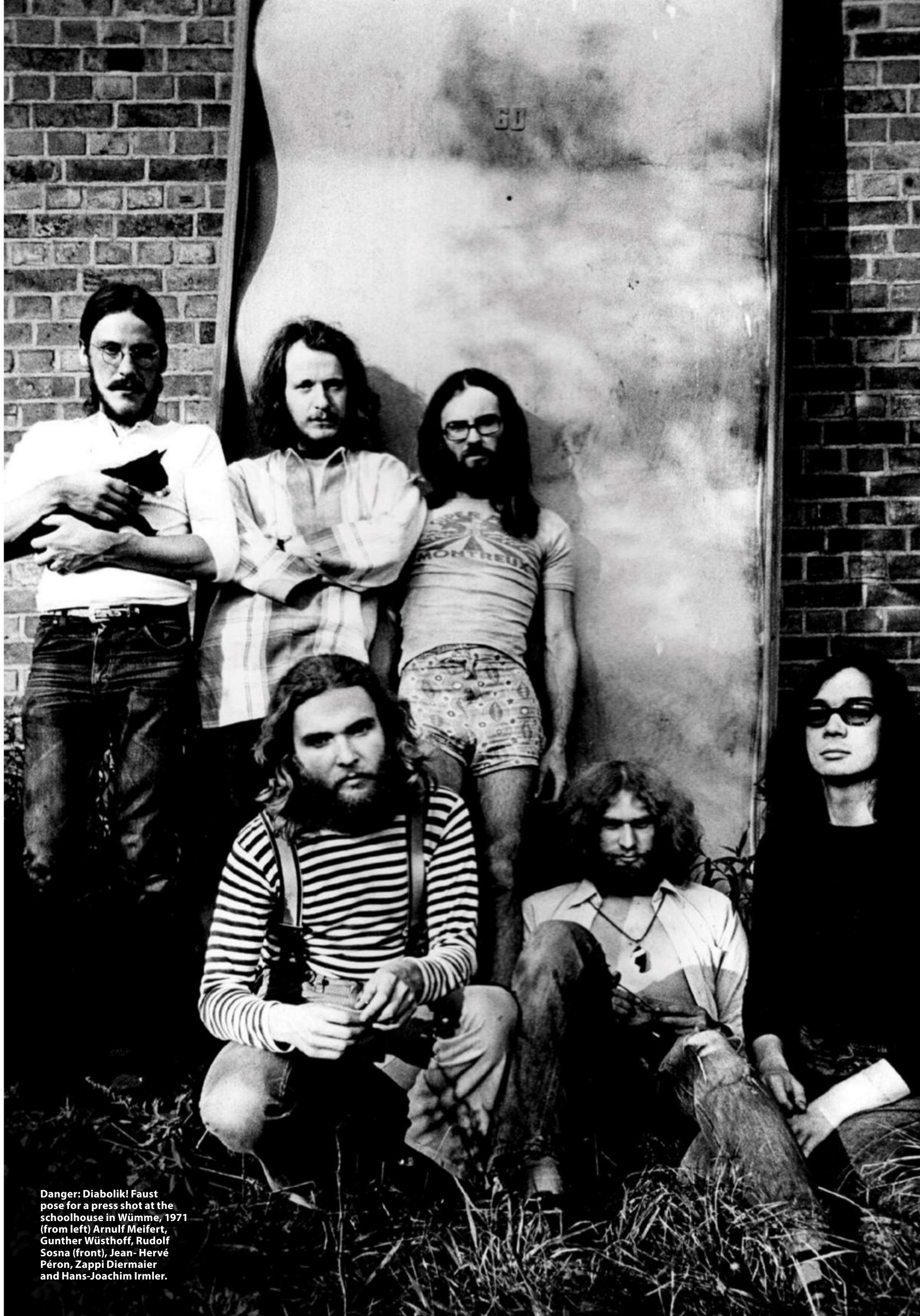
Willgoose brings Bowie up several times. He discovered *Low* at 23, and here he is in Berlin. Did he want to take a leaf out of Bowie’s book? “In terms of being brave, yes. I wanted *Bright Magic* to

have two very distinct sides, like *Low*, where the B-side is much more abstract and conceptual, moving away from stuff we’d done before. But I was also obsessed with Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey, the three-part structure of that film had wormed its way into my soul and built a framework for ‘my’ city and the record. The opening prehistoric section, I wanted to start with a track about the city emerging from the swamp, both literally and as an idea; then this explosion of sound and light, taking you to different places; and finally an abstract expressionist closing third. Then I began thinking: Is this an enormous folly? We’re a moderately successful band with a samples shtick and we’ve gone off to Germany, dropped 99 per cent of the samples and made it all in German. It’s brave, but is it wise?”

It’s a sobering thought. The cry “self-indulgent twaddle” looms like Dietrich’s shadow over any band that spends three months researching their material rather than simply rehashing the subjects that have dominated popular song for the past 50-60 years. But before we go our separate ways, Willgoose to Superdrug, MOJO through Checkpoint Charlie to the other side of the Thames, there is one final, very PSB-like thought on the power of humanity.

“The thing that comes with experience is learning to be confident enough to let your brain sort it all out while you feed it more information,” says Willgoose. “Mine started to hone in on this element of the city and, before I knew it, it had done most of the work for me. You’ve just got to give it time to work itself out and not force it. And that will happen.”

M



Danger: Diabolik! Faust pose for a press shot at the schoolhouse in Wümme, 1971 (from left) Arnulf Meifert, Gunther Wüsthoff, Rudolf Sosna (front), Jean- Hervé Péron, Zappi Diermaier and Hans-Joachim Irmler.

Dance With The Devil

A pneumatic drill, a naked bassist, a debut gig that was also “an execution”... The legend of Hamburg Krautrockers **Faust** is extraordinary, but the truth beggars belief. “Faust was the best, ultimate revolution in pop music,” discovers **Ian Harrison**.

MAY 12, 1974 GIORGIO MORODER'S
MUSICLAND STUDIOS, MUNICH.

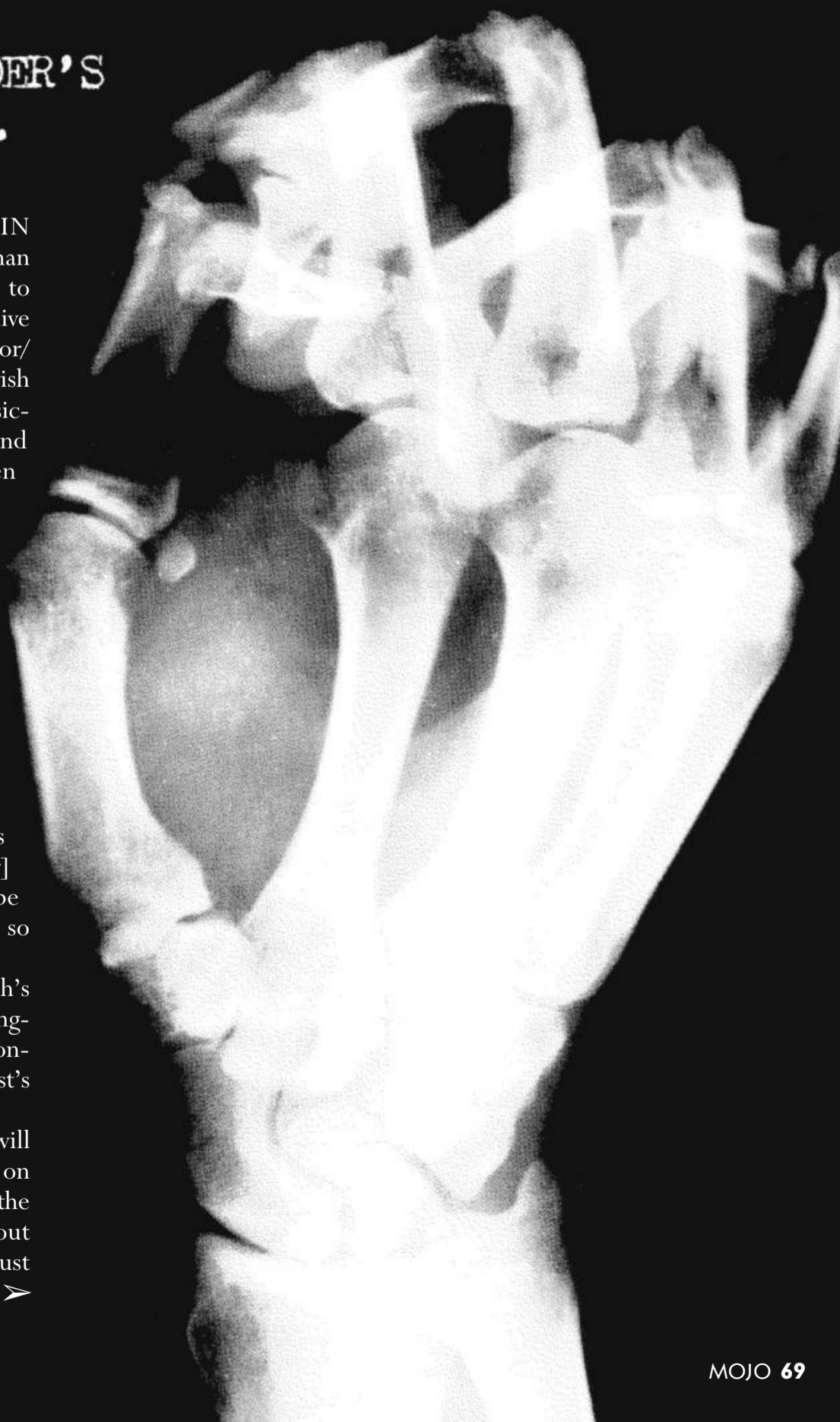
IT WASN'T MEANT TO END LIKE THIS. IN 1971 IN Hamburg, Faust had been lavished with riches by the German Polydor label. When that arrangement soured, they moved to Richard Branson's Virgin Records for two cult LPs and fabled live performances in Britain. Now, rudderless without their mentor/producer Uwe Nettelbeck, they were working nights in this swish underground studio recently used by the Rolling Stones. Musicland, like the posh Arabella Hotel upstairs where the group and their dogs were living like lords on room service, had been assured that Virgin would be paying the bills.

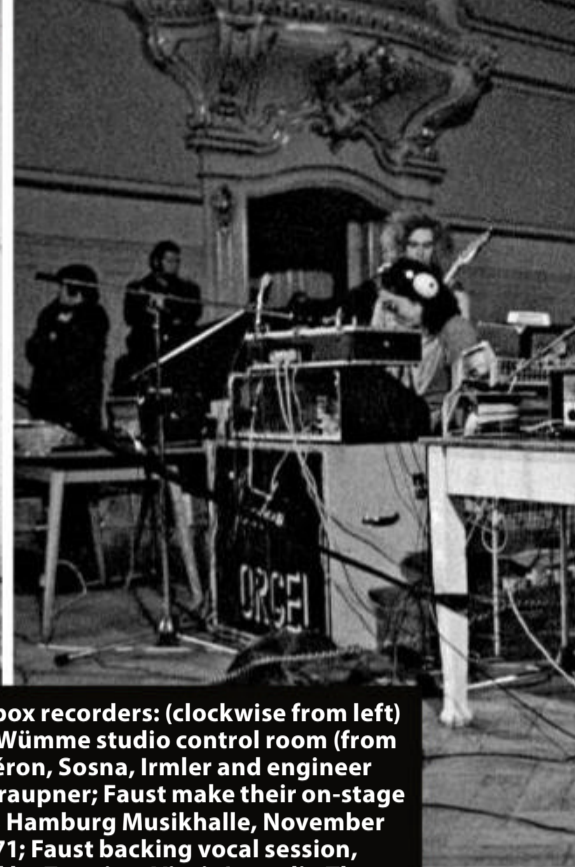
Except Virgin was not going to be paying the bills. “They'd spent all this money on the studio and they hadn't consulted us at all,” says Virgin co-founder and A&R Simon Draper. “They said, ‘We've made the record, what are you gonna do?’ And we said, ‘Well done, you keep it.’ And we terminated the contract. We'd had enough.”

As demands for monies owed became terser, Faust's famously charming roadie Rudy Bosma discreetly loaded the band's equipment and tapes into bassist Jean-Hervé Péron's BRS truck. “They had the barrier down in the car park,” recalls Péron, “and Rudy just drove, boom!, through the gate. It was like a movie. I remained in the studio with Rudolf [Sosna, guitar] and [Hans-Joachim] Irmeler [organ] and waited for us to be arrested. I was stoned out of my mind when this happened, so joyful that he managed to escape.”

Faust would spend three days in the cells courtesy of Munich's finest. Who bailed them out and settled their accounts? The long-suffering mothers of Irmeler and Sosna. After three years of wondrous, schizoid creativity on the chaotic edge of Krautrock, Faust's debt had been called in.

Forty-seven years on, the tracks they cut at Musicland will finally be released as the group intended. The album is included on *Faust 1971-1974*, a box set that covers their early zenith, later the subject of myriad excited myths. “I can't say anything about myths,” says the jovial Irmeler, modestly. “Just maybe this – Faust was the best, ultimate revolution in pop music...” ➤





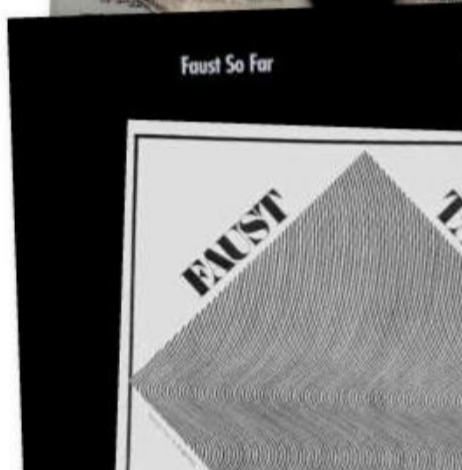
Black box recorders: (clockwise from left) in the Wümme studio control room (from left) Péron, Sosna, Irmler and engineer Kurt Graupner; Faust make their on-stage debut, Hamburg Musikhalle, November 23, 1971; Faust backing vocal session, incited by Zappi; at Virgin's studio The Manor, June 1973; opening salvos.

BADFINGER. THE KNACK. Oasis. BTS, even. Lots of bands have been rashly declared heirs to the Fab Four. But spare a thought for the sales staff of Polydor, whose biggest homegrown moneyspinner in 1971 was James Last, when presented with new signings Faust. Somehow, Uwe Nettelbeck – an influential film critic on Hamburg-based leftist magazine konkret (one of his colleagues was Ulrike Meinhof, soon to find infamy as a member of the Red Army Faction terror group) – had convinced Polydor manager Horst Schmolzi that Faust were the German Beatles. “That is how we got so much support,” says Faust drummer Werner ‘Zappi’ Diermaier. “We could do our things without any pressure. But the fellow musicians in Germany were envious.”

As has been observed, Faust were indeed just like The Beatles, if The Beatles had carried on in the vein of Revolution 9. The German group’s self-titled three-track debut LP, pressed on clear vinyl with an X-ray of a clenched fist on its transparent plastic sleeve, was a wrenching, lysergic pile-up of fuzz guitars, electronics, marching bands, thunderstorms, the riff from Louie Louie, a snatch of Deutschland Über Alles, tape abuse and the closing, cautionary observation, “nobody knows if it really happened.” Boldly, the album also featured snatches of All You Need Is Love and the Stones’ (I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction in the distorted introductory frequencies of opening piece Why Don’t You Eat Carrots?

Inspired by Fluxus, Dada, Dylan, Miles Davis, The Velvet Underground and Zappa, Faust’s origins were in two experimental Hamburg groups. From psychedelic rockers Nukleus came ex-navy radio operator/saxophonist Gunther Wüsthoff, intense part-Russian guitarist Sosna and the Casablanca-born Péron. The improvisational Campylognatus Citelli brought forth drummers Zappi and Arnulf Meifert, and the Swabian Irmler.

Accounts differ as to the chronology, and Zappi insists the two groups knew each other before Nettelbeck made contact. They



agree that the nascent Faust first played together in early ’71 in the narrow, musty Sternschanzenbunker, an underground former air raid shelter in northwest Hamburg. Wüsthoff says, “It all happened in one week, hardly any time to think about it.” He lists the “first encounter” as Tuesday, February 23, 1971; on the Thursday, Nettelbeck brought 1,000 Deutsche Marks from Polydor; on Friday the two groups met in the bunker for a first rehearsal; on Monday, March 1 they recorded a demo in Polydor’s Hamburg studio. Lieber Herr Deutschland was a satiric collision of crowd noise, freakout, drift and the text of a washing machine manual. By Wednesday they had signed to the label for a reputed 300,000 DM, a staggering near-£790,000 in today’s money.

The next move was to rural Wümme, an hour’s drive outside Hamburg. There they rejected Nettelbeck’s suggestion that they call themselves Götterdämmerung for the more ambivalent Faust – ‘fist’ in German, as well as referencing Goethe’s tragic hero, who sells his soul to the devil in return for secret knowledge. In Wümme they’d live and work in a converted school with a studio and in-house engineer Kurt Graupner. Among his innovations were Faust’s sound-manipulating Black Boxes. Each of the four units featured ring modulators and tone generators controlled by foot pedals. Members could plug in and distort and manipulate their own and bandmates’ instruments live: an unheard-of, revolutionary technique in 1971.

LIFE IN THE HERMETIC ECOSYSTEM THAT WAS Wümme involved recreational drugs, a dog called Crapeau, Péron’s habitual nudity, visits to the local discotheque and an armed raid when the polizei thought Baader-Meinhof Gang militant Gudrun Ensslin was hiding out there. Around the clock, there was



"There was no leader. We were extreme individuals, against each other and with each other." Irmier

Engineer Graupner says requests for a postponement were rejected by the label. "It was a flop in my eyes," he says. "Nevertheless, like many others, Uwe was satisfied in the end. The group became better known and there was a happy party afterwards."

Faust's no-compromise democracy was capricious, however, as Meifert discovered when, he says, Nettelbeck arranged for his ejection from Faust in the hours following the non-gig. As in a show trial, each member had to say aloud that they wanted him out.

"Put six individuals in a locked room and tell them they have to produce something overnight, which expresses their group situation as well as the *Zeitgeist*, otherwise they will be executed in the morning," he reflects, 50 years later, "[it's] an absurd existentialistic situation, a surreal nightmare. In fact, the concert was sort of an execution."

Meifert later worked closely with Günter Brus, the Viennese Actionist artist sentenced to six months in jail for covering his body in his own ordure, masturbating and vomiting while singing the Austrian national anthem.

THE FALLOUT FROM THE MUSIKHALLE FIASCO could have been terminal, and Nettelbeck later admitted he had to call on Faust fanatic and NME journalist Ian MacDonald to help stop Polydor from pulling the plug. "I... told him that he had to write that Faust was the biggest thing ever," said Nettelbeck, quoted in 2000's Faust box *The Wümme Years*. "With those two pages in a major music paper... I was able to reopen negotiations."

Even so, grimly aware that *Faust* had sold poorly (one estimate is less than 1,000 copies), Polydor made it clear that they wanted some radio songs on the next album. "We decided to make *So Far* a more trendy 'Pop' album," says Irmier.

With an edit of its title track released as a single in May 1972, the black-sleeved-and-labelled *So Far* duly showed a more melodic, structured aspect of the group. While it's debatable how, say, the metallic lava flows of Mamie Is Blue fit into trendy pop, elsewhere the approach paid glorious dividends: one of the defining Faust tracks was opener It's A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl, a head-bursting riff/chant stretched to breaking point over Zappi's brontosaurian ur-rhythm. "Rudolf came into my room, very excited, as he had a great idea," recalls the drummer. "I listened to his guitar and his singing and played a very simple groove to it. That was it. In Wümme we did not play the music, we lived the music."

On Nettelbeck's invitation, outsiders came to sample the studio's special atmosphere. Guitarist Peter Blegvad worked on the first album by pop subversionists Slapp Happy there in mid-1972. "It was intimidating, also very exciting," he says. "Faust were very generous and welcoming. I think they were all omnivorous about any sounds, whether they were noise or music of any kind. It was all grist to the mill."

Another visitor was New York minimalist Tony Conrad, who recorded his one-note classic *Outside The Dream Syndicate* with Faust amid clouds of marijuana smoke in October 1972. "[Wümme] was a microcosm, where everything seemed to have been evolving in some strange way over the course of months and months," Conrad told Faust biographer Andy Wilson. "[Later] they had no recollection at all of working with me."

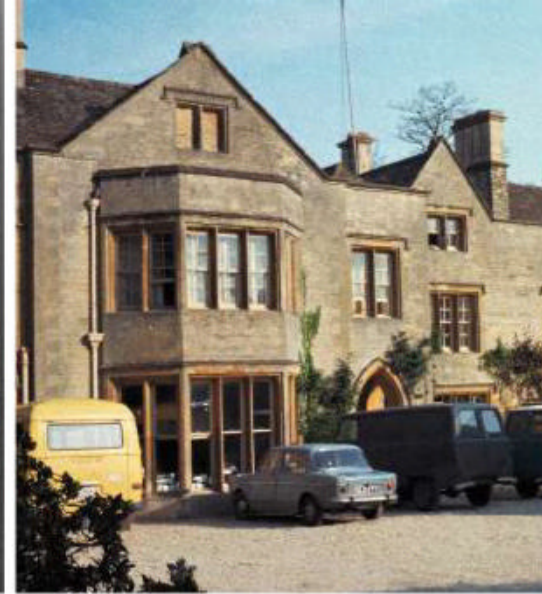
Yet in the familiar face of minimal sales, Polydor were no longer prepared to finance the free creative idyll. "They kicked us out," says Péron. "Dropped. Very loud and clear – 'No more money.'" In a night-raid the group cleared out the studio equipment and ➤

music. Wüsthoff adds "meditating and everything that monks would do" to the domestic day-to-day of life in the studio-commune. With no record players, TVs or radios on site, the group could create without outside influence whenever they pleased. With Irmier on his "world organ" (home-built in 1967 and still in use), players traded instruments – Sosna playing piano and singing, Péron blowing his trumpet – in pursuit of moments of breakthrough. Sosna and Péron contributed most of the lyrics, while Wüsthoff, Irmier and Graupner searched out new sounds and recording techniques, as tapes were spliced and looped across multiple rooms. "There was no leader," insists Irmier. "We were extreme individuals and sparring partners, against each other and with each other at the same time. That was Faust's unique energy field."

The objective, states Irmier, was a new German music free of the taints of both the Nazi period and the new American pop-cultural hegemony. In this, Faust were not alone. In Cologne, Can had formed, and in Düsseldorf, Kraftwerk (soon, so would Neu!). Yet Faust were more violent and uncompromising. "I was very impressed by Schönberg and Mahler's courage to actually *destroy* music," says Irmier. "The break with common 'beautiful' sounds and against listening habits and against music education – that still fascinates me."

Yet the new studio-group's debut live show, meant to show off Polydor's hot new signings to company staff at the Hamburg Musikhalle on November 23, 1971, was not a success. Instead, bravura artistic intentions translated into frantic soldering, a last-minute search for cables and one long music-free technical glitch that four TVs, a pyramid of tin cans and impromptu a cappella improv by Zappi could not alleviate.

"There was a plan to simulate that nothing is working technically, and when the public starts protesting, to start with a big bang of aleatoric sounds," recalls Meifert. "But people did not know if it was a happening, a performance, or kind of a hoax... For me personally it was a catastrophe."



Operation Overload!

How Faust invaded Britain with road drills, pinball and merciless volume. By Ian Harrison.

"IN THE midst of Faust-muzik time ticks like a bomb," read the Faust Manifesto, handed out on the group's 1973 UK tour. "Faust would like to play for you the *sound of yourself listening*."

Recalled by mind-blown attendees including Julian Cope, Faust's live shows attained mythic status: taking place on darkened stages lit by TVs showing static, a glowing pinball machine and LED lights on the group's Black Boxes, performances also included the group attacking stone slabs with a pneumatic jackhammer. Unloved at home they may have been, but according to Virgin's Simon Draper, "There was a big appetite for electronic music in Britain and Faust were loud and aggressively electronic. They were extreme, a different scale."

"We had no need to look different from our British audience," says Irmiler, "without the ruffled shirt and disguises of the pop bands. Our sound irritated and inspired many... we gave very special concerts, sometimes with very intensive interaction with the audience. And that before punk!"

The Faust Manifesto's author was Peter Blegvad (in his words: "it was cobbled together at the last minute, in some office in Virgin"). He also played live with the group in late 1973.

"I was never sober if I could possibly help it," says Blegvad, who recalls improvising tracks including Krautrock, Psalter Stuck and The Sad Skinhead. "I can remember sitting on-stage in pitch blackness, pounding out this monotonous rhythm, at ear-splitting volume, thinking, God, the audience is going to hate this, and the audience absolutely loved it... sometimes I played the pneumatic drill, trying hard not to chew up the stages of these lovely Victorian music halls."

With the Black Boxes necessitating the wearing of

headphones, he adds at other times, "you were supposed to show your openness to other aspects of performance by putting your instrument down and strolling over to one of the pinball machines that were on-stage and playing a few games. As if playing pinball was a spectacle of the same standing as playing a guitar."

The group had also toured the UK that summer, including a fondly remembered show at the Rainbow on June 10, where Wüsthoff recalls Zappi's microphone picking up a mezzo-soprano on TV singing in the same key as the band's jamming. "We only had one pinball machine," he adds. "You were able to open it to attach an alligator clip and get a musical impulse, which would then be forwarded to the synthesizer. Most of the time Zappi played pinball while I was busy with the synthesizer."

Faust's last UK gig was at the Liverpool Stadium, supported by Henry Cow, on October 27, 1973. "There is this bizarre hatred/love relationship between the British and the German," says Péron. "In a way being called 'Kraut' is not very nice, but Krautrock very soon turned into a term of love, of respect. We talked about it, 'Ah, they're calling us Krautrock? So we are going to name this song Krautrock, and we are going to Krautrock you.'"

See Faust IV Live! at the Union Chapel, London, on November 15, 2021.



◀ looked across the channel for their next move: a new label called Virgin was about to launch in London. Their commercial hopes remained: "I want it to be popular music," Nettelbeck told Karl Dallas in March 1973. "I would rather like it to be considered as rock."

As buyer for the Virgin record shop chain, Simon Draper knew there was an appetite for experimental West German music in the UK, and that Faust had two influential supporters in John Peel and Ian MacDonald. He recalls a trip to Hamburg with Richard Branson, when they stayed with Nettelbeck and his beautiful wheelchair-bound wife Petra and signed a deal after a meal and drinks. Part of Nettelbeck's offer was *The Faust Tapes*. Virgin could have the album for nothing, he stipulated, but they couldn't make any money on it, and the cover art should be by op artist Bridget Riley. After the three men visited the artist's west London home, she agreed to let Virgin use her 1964 painting *Crest* for the sleeve.

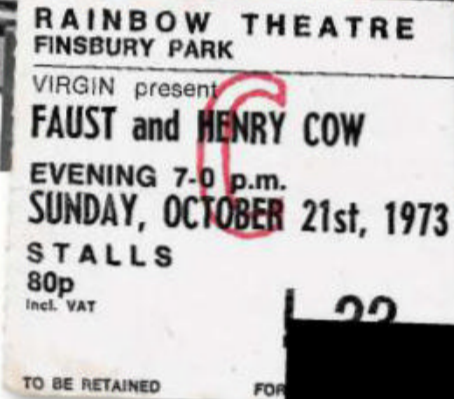
A CORNERSTONE OF THE GROUP'S LEGEND, *THE Faust Tapes* remains an enjoyably painful experience, jump-collaging yapping avant-delirium and such beautiful pop lucidities as Flashback Caruso. Graupner calls the raw materials, "test recordings and experiments of mine... not intended for a release," and while the protagonists don't agree on who did the editing, Nettelbeck indicated it was him. Released in May 1973, it was sold for a mere 48p as part of Virgin's label-launching salvo that also included Mike Oldfield's monster hit *Tubular Bells*. To maximise the profile-raising, admiring press notices bedecked the sleeve, with French magazine *Best* hailing Faust as, "the most avant-garde group in Germany, if not the world." Draper estimates it sold 100,000 copies, but, too cheap to qualify for the album charts, it actually lost the label money.

With the idea of Faust successfully planted in the UK music-mind, and a UK tour booked for June, plans were laid for a new album. Yet Faust's arrival in London was marred by truculence. "We found a flat for them in Earls Court and they thought it was a complete tip," says Draper. "They started complaining immediately, and it went on and on. I can remember them writing something in German on one of the mixing desks at [Virgin's Oxfordshire studio] the Manor as well, about



Flipping heck! Faust added pinball to their UK stage show.

"Uwe burst into the recording studio and said, No, no! Stop doing this! This is miserable music!" Péron



To the männer born: (clockwise from above left) Faust on tour in the UK with Peter Blegvad (second left) and Uli Trepte (right); at Virgin's Manor Studio, June 1973 for the *Faust IV* sessions; at the Amersham Arms, New Cross, London, June 18, 2008; Virgin co-founder Simon Draper; Irmiler and circuit boards; Petra Krause and Uwe Nettelbeck's wedding, Hamburg, June 5, 1964.

something which was shit, you know, whether it was the Manor or Virgin. They seemed to believe that the world owed them and that they were really important, because Nettelbeck and Ian MacDonald were telling them they were."

Significantly, during Faust's few weeks recording at the Manor at the end of June, Péron remembers an uncharacteristically blunt intervention by Nettelbeck. "We were stoned out of our heads, just doodling some useless music," the bassist recalls. "Uwe opened the door of the recording room and really burst in and said, 'No, no! Stop doing this! This is miserable music!' It was a shocking moment. And it was good, because that led to Jennifer, that led to Krautrock and other parts of *Faust IV*."

Embracing a genre heading that was coined as a put-down, Krautrock was nearly 12 grimy minutes of *vorwärts* glide, while Jennifer could hold its own in a starry-eyed staring contest with Syd Barrett's Terrapin. On its release in September 1973, ads for *Faust IV* were only half joking when they promised 'Very Commercial'. Still, it seemed Faust's world was beginning to fall apart. Tired of their new situation with Virgin (and particularly, it seems, with Branson), Nettelbeck bowed out after mixing *Faust IV* and returned to Germany, as did Graupner. Irmiler and Sosna also retreated, meaning Blegvad and "spacebox"-playing Uli Trepte of Heidelberg freaks Guru Guru were recruited for an autumn UK tour with Henry Cow, which endeared Faust further to the volume-tolerant greatcoat wearers of pre-punk Britain (see sidebar). Still, a breakthrough was denied them.

"Whenever things appear to be very good for us, then we turn

around and destroy it," says Péron. "We did this with Polydor, same with Virgin. Richard was very ready to invest to make us famous and create money, like with Mike Oldfield... We seem to have a self-destructing mechanism in us. I do have regrets. After many decades, I realise how essential Uwe Nettelbeck was for us. Because he gave us direction, he never imposed anything on us, he was a fantastic producer, he was a friend... I visited him many years after he was done with Faust and I told him, 'Uwe, we were such stupid assholes to treat you like an enemy, on the side of the industry.' He fought so hard for our music. Shit... why didn't we see this?"

WITH VIRGIN'S INTEREST WANING, ONLY one last wheeze remained, when the returned Irmiler persuaded Faust and Graupner to regroup and brazen it out in Munich. A return to experimental roots

after a tilt at success, the wired, sometimes beatific recordings from Musicland are now fixed as the Faust album entitled *Punkt* (in English: 'point', or 'full stop'). Back in 1974, chastened by their last door closing, Faust fell dormant. In the years that followed, former tourmate Chris Cutler of Henry Cow kept the records in print and the flame burning via his Recommended Records.

Revivals of the group began in the early '80s, when Irmiler, Péron and Zappi played shows together in Germany, though an attempted return of a by-now heavy drinking

Sosna was not to be. In the '90s, a more concerted effort saw all three playing on 1996's *You Know FaUSt* and scandalous international gigs involving leaf blowers, cement mixers and action-painting. Péron would later leave the group, but would form a new version of Faust with Zappi in 2004. Two entites would co-exist until Irmiler's industrial-kosmische Faust Is Last said goodbye to the concept in 2010. It seems that the Péron and Diermaier faction has also run its course. Zappi says the group will not play together again ("because Jean-Hervé Péron and Joachim Irmiler adopt each of them a leadership attitude") though in July 2021 he appeared to launch a new version of Faust with the involvement of Gunther Wüsthoff.

"We still respect each other [but] we splendidly ignore one another," says Péron, who will play *Faust IV* live across Europe in November 2021. "It bubbled up at some points afterwards, but the real, real Faust was 1971 to 1974. So for me, *Punkt* is the end of the real Faust, of what Faust has to say. That's it. Over. Full stop. But this Faust thing, it was something magic that happened, and you can still hear that."

The commune at Wümme, the Manor and Musicland have all gone, as have Sosna and Nettelbeck, who died in 1996 and 2007 respectively. The international music business is also changed beyond recognition. Yet the powerful vibrations created by the would-be Deutsche Beatles continue to resonate, punching holes in time with their visionary, exacting and ultimately life-affirming sounds, which Nettelbeck would have rather liked to be considered as rock. "We wanted to create something completely independent," says the ever-twinkling Irmiler, "and everyone was free." Nobody knows if it really happened? It really happened. **M**



Faust 1971-1974 is released on vinyl and CD on Bureau B on October 8. Peter Blegvad's *Go Figure* and *The Peter Blegvad Bandbox* are available on the ReR MegaCorp label.

The Golden Couple

2007 was a stellar year for *Robert Plant*. *Led Zeppelin* reunited, spectacularly. And he teamed with *Alison Krauss* to craft the Grammy-gobbling *Raising Sand*. Fourteen years on, one of these projects has been reprised. Cue: death blues, murder ballads, Calexico and more, nailed by two singers who remain perfectly out of sync. “The differences are a blast,” they tell *Andrew Perry*.

PLUS *Zeppelin IV* Revisited: “Misty Mountain Hop was just *so* good.” Portrait by *Perou*.





"We've got nothing to lose"; Robert Plant and Alison Krauss, on the rise again.



WITH A POT OF BUILDER'S TEA ON THE GO AND SOME north African crypto-junglist beats clattering out of his iPhone, Robert Plant is ensconced upstairs at a 15th century inn on the banks of the River Severn. With a characteristic flourish, he has christened our meeting place – a first-floor lounge which also serves as a busy corridor to the pub's overnight accommodation – the 'Harlequin Room', thanks to its garishly patchworked armchair coverings.

It's a very 'Percy' scene: Led Zeppelin's Golden God – wet-look curls unfussily tied back; eyes searching over rectangular reading glasses – hiding in plain sight; alone, with everybody. "I feel like Patrick McGoochan's gonna come through the door any minute," he merrily observes, equating our surrounds with the rococo world of McGoochan's surreal 1960s TV series, *The Prisoner*.

MOJO has been summoned for a differently surreal escapade: a three-way Zoom conversation with Alison Krauss, post-millennial sweetheart of old-time country music, and duettist on Plant's most beloved post-Zeppelin album. 2007's *Raising Sand* saw the seemingly mismatched couple's mix of country, folk, blues and early rock'n'roll shift north of 2 million units. The pair toured arenas together and bagged five Grammys (including Album Of The Year), but amid clamour for a follow-up the trail went cold – until now.

Recorded in Nashville, as before, with American roots guru T Bone Burnett presiding over a stellar cast of sessioners, *Raise The Roof* stirs the same gumbo of styles on songs whose dates of provenance range from 2011 (smouldering curtain-raiser Quattro, penned by Tucson, Arizona alt-Americana outfit, Caexico) right back to 1930 and Geeshie Wiley's Last Kind Words, an extraordinary female-voiced blues lament which was only 'discovered' by post-war enthusiasts in the mid '90s. The choices sit well with a singer who loves to dig deep for obscure repertoire. "When I kick the bucket, songs will probably exude from all of my orifices," says Plant. "There'll be zillions of bits and pieces, from Umm Kulthum's Orchestra In Cairo right through to Lonnie Donegan. Fuckin' hell, the lot of it – take that!"

Raise The Roof also upholds the spirit of Led Zeppelin's remodeling of arcane blues – think their monumental over-amping of Memphis Minnie's When The Levee Breaks on *Led Zeppelin IV*. As ever, Plant is quick to sever connections with his glorious past.

"The good thing with Alison and I is that we're a couple of kindred spirits," he says, before launching into the first of many broadsides against heritage rock. "Most musicians form a band, then they stay in the band until it's over – 20 years, 30 years, 50 years, whatever it is, and it starts to look sadly decrepit. It's like people hanging onto a life raft, or (*with a frown*) staying in a comfortable place. With us two, there's nothing written in blood. We were ready to do something new, and we knew how good it was before, so we can just join up again and see where we go. We've got nothing to lose."

The packaging for *Raising Sand* was designed to imply a closeness between the pair, perhaps even to imply a certain romantic frisson. A sticker on the British CD quoted Sylvie Simmons' five-star review in MOJO, which described the musical relationship as "so gentle, attentive and respectfully intimate, it feels like a courtship dance".

But Covid has disrupted plans for the dance to renew on the physical plane. Today the pair are on different continents and Krauss has chosen to attend our Zoom

meeting with the video function switched off ("It would scare everyone," she explains).

"I'm finding this weird," she soon admits, meaning Covid. "For so many months now, I've not been out of my own thoughts, just making stew and wiping the counter off. Am I making any sense?"

"Honey," Plant gallantly replies, "you're there with your vegetables bubbling away, making your meat and three – you're doing fine!"

AT THE VERY OUTSET, THERE WAS A MATCH-maker who put Krauss and Plant together: Bill Flanagan, the American journalist best known for his 'official' conversations with Bob Dylan, approached both parties circa 2000, to appear on CMT Crossroads, a VH1 series specialising in unlikely artist team-ups. "Bill called me up and asked, 'Have you ever thought about singing with a woman?'" Plant remembers, "and I said, 'Well, I did in 1971, with Sandy Denny' – but that took about 10 minutes! Like, 'Here's the lyrics – let's just do it!'"

One could argue that Led Zeppelin's *oeuvre*, with its pumped-up masculine sexuality, was rarely a place for the feminine. It takes Plant a head-scratching minute or two to remember any women who'd sung with him in his solo career before 2007 (Toni Halliday, later of Curve, guested on two late '80s records, while Clannad's Moya Brennan coo'd ethereal back-up on 1993's Come Into My Life), but Flanagan's call also set him on a path towards a hitherto unexplored genre for him – country music.

Initially, he phoned while Krauss was getting her one-year-old off to sleep. "I had to keep my voice low and monotone," she recalls, "and I'm sure Robert thought I was a weirdo," but he finally engineered a meeting in November 2004 in Cleveland, Ohio, during rehearsals for his headlining appearance at a tribute to Leadbelly at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

"We were in an Armenian community centre and I was petrified," he says, laughing at the unglamorousness of his invitation. "It was the funniest night, wasn't it, Alison, because you kept looking at me like something really strange had happened?"

"That's just my face," she deadpans.

"You said to me, 'Why don't you just sing the same part twice so that I can actually harmonise?' I thought, 'Oh, I see, that's why Porter Wagoner sounded so good with Dolly Parton.' That was the beginning of us, really – just, shit or bust."

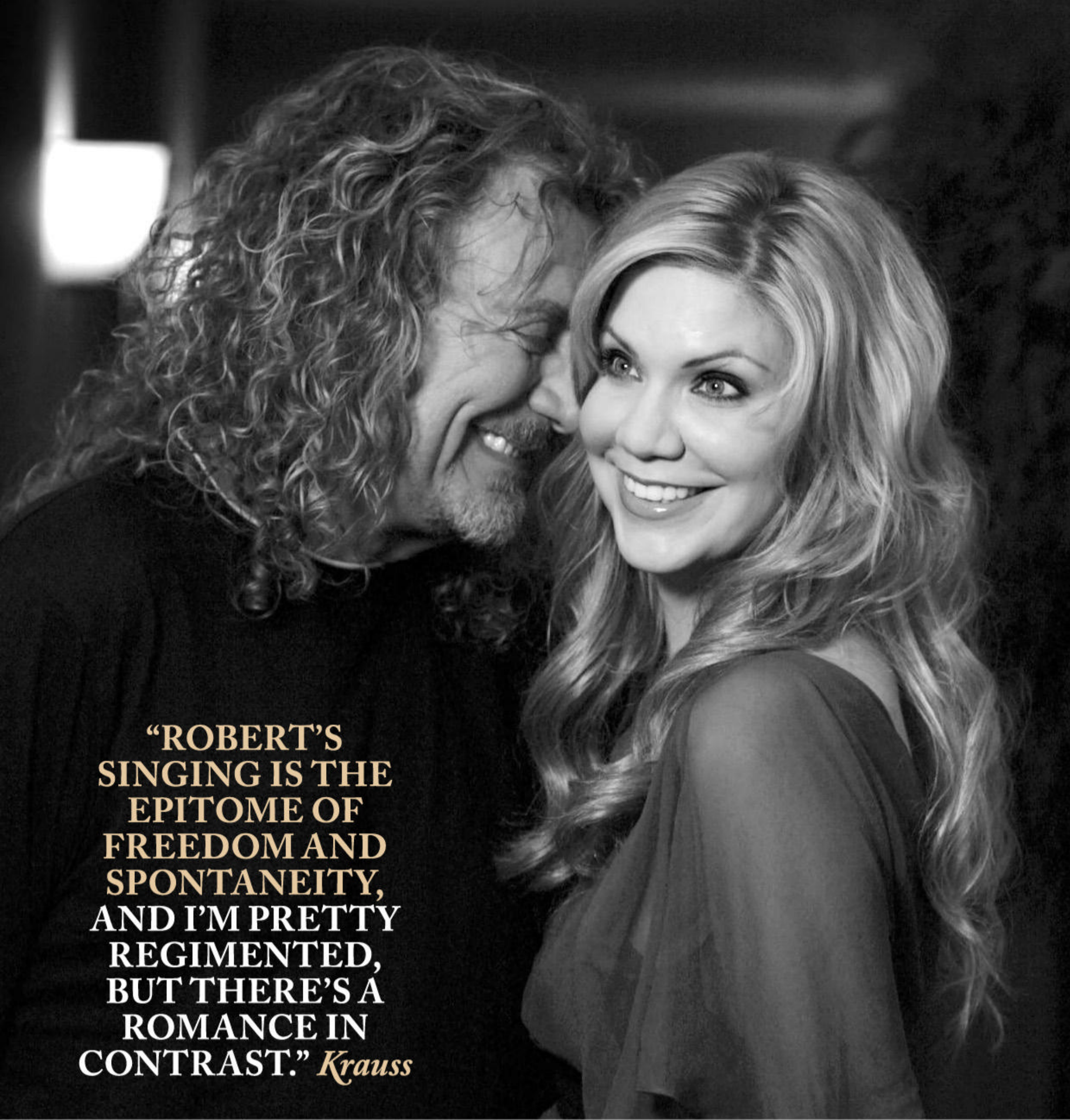
From there, it took another three years for Plant to finish a campaign with his burgeoning Strange Sensation band, and cajole Krauss into making *Raising Sand*.

From the UK's perspective, where country's popularity is less conspicuous, it's hard to imagine how Krauss didn't just drop everything to run off with our homegrown rock god. State-side, by contrast, he might almost be regarded as the junior partner, an ➤

Jonathan Evans/Eyevine, Getty (2)



Stick with me baby: (opposite, clockwise from main) Plant and Krauss in 2007; with *Raising Sand* and *Raise The Roof* producer T Bone Burnett enjoying a release party for the former LP at The Campbell Apartment, New York Grand Central Terminal, October 22, 2007; Krauss and Plant performing at the 51st Grammy Awards, Los Angeles Staples Center, February 8, 2009; (this page) *Raising Sand* and *Raise The Roof*.



“ROBERT’S
SINGING IS THE
EPITOME OF
FREEDOM AND
SPONTANEITY,
AND I’M PRETTY
REGIMENTED,
BUT THERE’S A
ROMANCE IN
CONTRAST.” *Krauss*



Hair apparent:
Plant on-stage
with Led
Zeppelin,
1971.

“PLANT DONS A PILLAGING
NORSEMAN’S HELMET
BEFORE LETTING
RIP WITH HIS
BATTLE CRY.”

Whole Lotta Lungs

Ten of the best of *Robert Plant*, 1969–2021, by *Mark Blake*.

1 *Babe I’m Gonna Leave You*

(Led Zeppelin, Atlantic 1969)



Plant first heard Joan Baez’s version of folkie Anne Bredon’s *Babe I’m Gonna Leave You* during a musical bonding session with Jimmy Page in summer 1968. Here, the 21-year-old novice stamps his authority on the song, matching the band’s dynamics and exploring his ability to switch effortlessly from a whisper to a scream.

2 *Whole Lotta Love*

(Led Zeppelin II, Atlantic 1969)

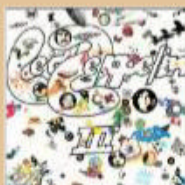


Whole Lotta Love is much imitated (never bettered) but over-familiarity hasn’t taken the shine off Plant’s lead vocal. His voice becomes an instrument of battle alongside

Page’s Theremin during the abstract mid-song breakdown. While his returning vocal – “Way down inside!” – swings harder than the hammer of the gods.

3 *Immigrant Song*

(Led Zeppelin III, Atlantic 1970)



Plant dons a pillaging Norseman’s helmet and animal skins before letting rip with his battle cry. He then drags the listener with him through “the ice and snow” as he seesaws between vocal registers to “drive our ships to new lands”. It’s over and done in 2:26 minutes – with not a second wasted – but leaves you wanting more.

4 *Going To California*

(Led Zeppelin IV, Atlantic 1971)



Plant made his first trip to the States in Christmas 1968, and plays the wide-eyed Black Country boy abroad on this gentle travelogue. But there’s also regret about the bad druggy vibes evident on later American tours. “Seems that the wrath of the gods got a punch on the nose,” Plant cries, upending the song’s otherwise idyllic charm.

5 *Ten Years Gone*

(Physical Graffiti, Swan Song 1975)



By 1975, Plant had proved himself on many a ballad (see *The Rain Song* from *Houses Of The Holy*, for one). But there’s a charming husk and a tinge of nostalgia in his voice on this bruised-sounding love song; all about a girlfriend (see *The Secret Life Of Plant* panel, p83) who asked him to choose between her and a life in rock’n’roll.

6 *Gallows Pole*

(No Quarter: Jimmy Page & Robert Plant Unledded, Fontana, 1994)



Plant’s voice dominates on Page & Plant’s reboot of this trad. arr folk song from *Led Zeppelin III*. He builds the tension, singing like a man on tip toes with a noose round his neck (“Hangman, hangman... hold it a little while”), watching the rescue party racing towards him, but not fast enough.

7 *Gone, Gone, Gone (Done Moved On)*

(Raising Sand, Rounder 2007)

Taken from his first *pas de deux* with Krauss, *Gone, Gone, Gone* joins the dots between Plant’s love of obscure ’50s rock’n’roll and Krauss’s deep roots in Americana. The melding of voices over a loose rockabilly swing showcases his previously under-explored gift as a duet partner.

8 *Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down*

(Band Of Joy, Decca 2010)



Solo Plant has explored electropop, trip-hop and 1940s proto-rock’n’roll, but this century’s forays into arcane roots music suit his voice best. Taken from an album named after his pre-Zeppelin group, Plant negotiates this traditional gospel song’s deep twists and turns, sounding like both an Old Testament prophet and a sonorous bluesman.

9 *Kashmir*

(Celebration Day, Atlantic, 2012)



There was an unpredictable, anything-can-happen quality to Led Zeppelin’s one-off live reunion in 2007. Plant approached his performance as a 59-year-old gentleman, but imbued *Physical Graffiti*’s epic blockbuster with the gravitas it deserved, even receiving a spontaneous round of applause for his trademark Percy shriek at 2:25 minutes.

10 *You Led Me To The Wrong*

(Raise The Roof, Rounder, 2021)

The growth of Plant’s feel for Americana’s themes and stories could not be better exemplified than by Ola Belle Reed’s Appalachian lament from Plant & Krauss’s upcoming reunion album, stoked by Krauss’s glowering fiddle. Listen to the grain and ache of Plant’s soon-to-be-executed narrator and the theatrical death throes of, say, *In My Time Of Dying*. There’s no comparison.

◀ interloper wooing one of American music's biggest hitters. And indeed to a degree, Krauss called the shots, calling in T Bone Burnett, who had produced her contributions to successful soundtracks for the Coen Brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (alongside Ralph Stanley and Gillian Welch), and *Cold Mountain*.

"Alison is the Aretha Franklin of bluegrass music," says Burnett, "the person who redefined it for future generations. I've known her for 30 years. She started out as a little girl playing country fiddle. In her teens, she played with Tony Rice, the patron saint of bluegrass guitarists, and got tutored extremely well."

Krauss crashed into the pop-country mainstream with 1995's *When You Say Nothing At All*, and never looked back. Now 50, she has amassed 27 Grammys, the fourth highest tally after Beyoncé, Quincy Jones and conductor Georg Solti.

"When Alison sings," Burnett continues, "it's like she has a beautiful bell in her voice, and she has a particular genius for writing harmonies, very disciplined, whereas with Robert" — he chuckles — "there's something deeply primal and atavistic about his singing, and his being."

Burnett brokered their first try-out, at Krauss's house in Nashville. "We sat down in your parlour, picked up a guitar, and started singing," remembers Plant, "and I felt really naked. I'm so used to being behind an SM58 mike with fairy dust on it, so as I can go into character. I'm just a bluffer, really. In your world, there's a nakedness of preparation: you have to be far more on it, and honest, and have a really good voice at the beginning of it all."

Plant casts himself as a risk-taker, but this was a challenge for both, a collision of music-making values, where each abandoned their comfort zone.

"Growing up in bluegrass," says Krauss, "you didn't go to high school games, or prom — you spent all of your time practising harmonies to make them exact. The idea was to blend as closely as possible, to sound like one voice. That exactness and stoicism is part of what mountain music is about, but it was immediately obvious that this collaboration was really not going to be exact. Robert's singing is the epitome of freedom and spontaneity, and I'm pretty regimented, but there's a lot of romance in contrast, and I think that's why it worked so well with us. It was more about the differences in our voices, and the differences are a blast."

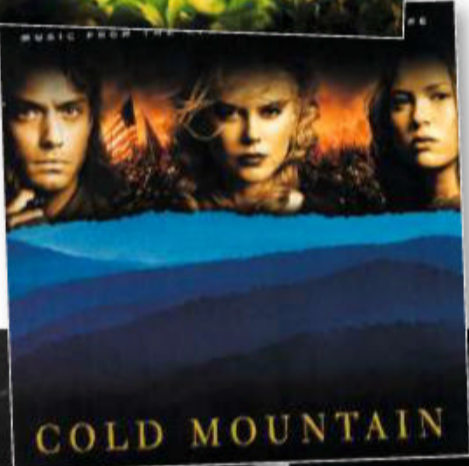
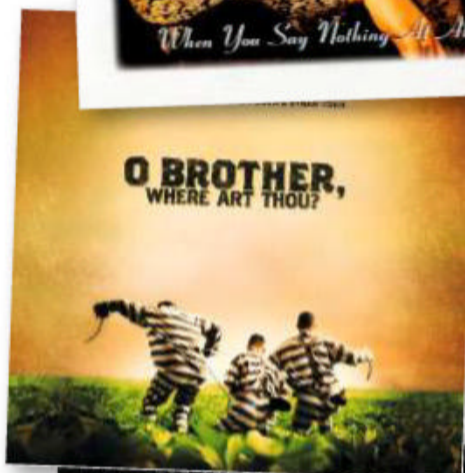
"ALISON IS THE ARETHA FRANKLIN OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC — THE PERSON WHO REDEFINED IT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS." *T Bone Burnett*

THERE WAS A PLEASING FRICTION, TOO, BETWEEN the country and folk material Burnett brought to the table (including *Killing The Blues* by Chris Isaak sideman Rowland Salley, and two from doomed ex-Byrd Gene Clark), and the

rockers and R&B jewels sourced from Plant's home jukebox, such as Li'l Millet And His Creoles' sultry *Rich Woman*, and Fortune Teller — by Benny Spellman, but also, notes Plant, "by The Merseybeats, The Hollies and the Stones, because it was the go-to song for all the British groups in 1963."

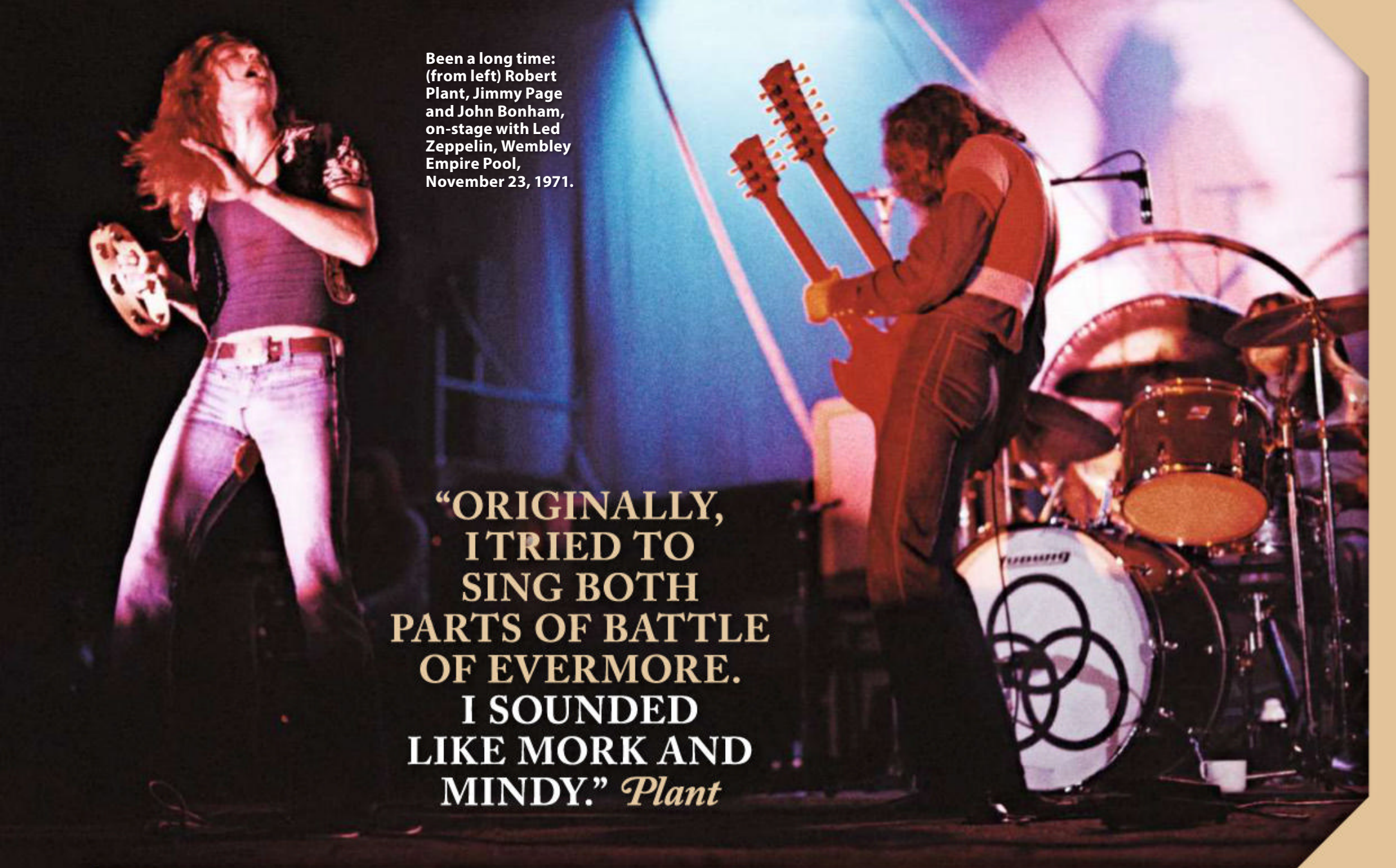
Instead of pre-arranging tracks in advance, Burnett had them hash out arrangements on the spot at Nashville's Sound Emporium studio, with an extraordinary band hand-picked by Burnett, including on electric guitar latter-day Tom Waits sideman Marc Ribot, whose eccentric style Waits himself dubbed "Cubist funk". On some tracks they were joined by Norman Blake, an ever-present guitarist and mandolinist for Johnny Cash in the '60s, and later for Krauss's teacher, Tony Rice. In such rarefied company, Burnett fostered spontaneity. "We'd cross parts a lot, like the original Louvin Brothers," explains Krauss, "where there'd be no fixed tenor or baritone singer, and both parts are in the melody."

"I knew nothing about the Louvin Brothers," admits Plant, "any more than Alison probably knew Blind Lemon Jefferson, and that was the joy of it all. We ended up with an elegance and a slink — something to do ➤



Sister, where art thou?: Union Station (from left) Adam Steffey, Barry Bales, Alison Krauss, Tim Stafford, Ron Block; (right) Krauss in concert, 1990.





Been a long time:
(from left) Robert
Plant, Jimmy Page
and John Bonham,
on-stage with Led
Zeppelin, Wembley
Empire Pool,
November 23, 1971.

“ORIGINALLY,
I TRIED TO
SING BOTH
PARTS OF BATTLE
OF EVERMORE.
I SOUNDED
LIKE MORK AND
MINDY.” *Plant*

Ze So, So Good!

On the 50th Anniversary of *Led Zeppelin IV* Plant talks
Andrew Perry through his old band’s 37-million-seller:
“We were in a really fluid creative place.”

STILL A SHOO-IN for any sensible Top 5 of the all-time greatest rock albums, *Led Zeppelin IV* endures for its all-killer-no-filler songwriting and the breadth of its ambitions. Even more diverse than its predecessor, the folk and pop-curious *Led Zeppelin III*, here the band’s exploration of multiple genres – country blues from 1929, turn-of-the-’70s West Coast psych, piledriving rock’n’roll – coalesced into a sublime balance of acoustic and electric, serenity and energy.

At Headley Grange, the gone-to-seed Hampshire mansion where they’d cut much of *III*, the quartet had The Rolling Stones’ mobile recording studio parked outside, with cables fed in through the drawing-room window, and Stones pianist, Ian Stewart, helping to operate it (‘Stu’ also played piano on *Rock And Roll*). Plant, in a grump, trotted out *Stairway To Heaven*’s opening “all that glitters is not gold” couplet in a few seconds of inspiration by the fireside, while *When The Levee Breaks*’ monolithic wallop was captured with John Bonham’s kit in Headley’s once-grand stairwell. An abundance of magic moments add up to a still majestic whole.

MOJO: Isn’t *Led Zep IV* a bit like *Raise The Roof*: a sample of all the different styles of music you embraced at that point?

RP: Yeah, strange isn’t it? I think that was the beauty of the players, of all of us, that maybe the style went over here, and then over there, and we could cut it wherever. But we were in a really fluid creative place.

Do you remember the writing? You had a brief stay with Jimmy Page in rural Powys.

It was the days of the first cassette recorders, and when Jimmy and I went to Bron-Yr-Aur, we brought these very fancy Sony fold-away, imitation-leather briefcase recorders, with two speakers and a recorder and a good mike. Some of the recordings on those still sound great, with a big old grandfather clock ticking in the background. Around that time, it was just falling out of us.

The sessions started at Island’s London studios in December ’69, but the following month you returned to Headley Grange...

We were in a really fluid creative *physical* place there. Headley Grange was very good. It’s shit or bust, if you decide to spend your entire life for a period of days with the same people, in the same building. It can get a little sticky, and that [era] was the first time we had done it that way.

Once *in situ*, was it easy to spirit up these diverse musics?

Most of the time it really did work with us going from *that* idea, then bang into *that* idea – we could just put on another cloak, or personality. Misty Mountain Hop was just so good. We had spent so much time on the West Coast, at those Seattle festivals – not just the rock festivals, the whole town of Seattle was such an expressive place to be. Dan Hicks And His Hot Licks, Danny O’Keeffe and all those people were playing

around there. The Sonics, too, but maybe they had just given up – before they came back 40 years later! And that song was an appropriate lyric against an amazing riff and an incredible sound.

So yeah, a lot of it was outward-looking, shoulders back, arms outstretched, and saying, ‘Here we all are!’ Laughable, I suppose, by the time the punks came along.

Nowadays, California is so reachable, but back then it must’ve seemed like a paradise, where ’60s ideals were coming to fruition. *Going To California* is so beautifully in thrall to the place...

The West Coast was so far away, and then you get there, and you realise that everybody is marching to a tune that we had been crying out for back home – we were all part of the same throng. There was a real movement of spirit and intention. I mean, if you were going to do a study of that period from ’66 to [’71], perhaps the golden optimism had been marred by – strangely enough! – excess, and the forces-that-be didn’t mind that happening at all. There was not gonna be anybody in Congress joining the throng, although Jimmy Carter later on really was a good guy and brought good things through.

At another extreme, there’s a wonderful and unique strain of Brit-folk medievalism on *IV*, in the acoustic passages of *Stairway To Heaven*, and *The Battle Of Evermore*, which is kind of J.R.R. Tolkien meets the Celtic mythology of the English-Welsh border wars.

That folk-tale stuff is all about here – just 30 miles from here, you’re in it, in mid-Wales, Montgomery and beyond, but the circumstance is every day.

Had you ever duetted before *Battle Of Evermore*, when you called in Sandy Denny?

No, never. And it’s not really a duet: if you think about it, it’s just two people singing the same song, because there’s no harmonic. The only thing there is, is a cascade of descending notes, where we quite often end up in a plausible harmony at the end. But I wrote so many lyrics

Getty (4)



Heaven's gate: (clockwise from above) Bonham and Plant, Hiroshima, Japan, 1971; Plant in Tokyo, 1971; Plant and Sandy Denny, Best Male and Best Female Singer at the 1970 Melody Maker Pop Poll Awards.



◀ with New Orleans, and something to do with the Grand Ole Opry, just melded together.”

Such was the alchemy of *Raising Sand*: a live-in-the-room ensemble piece as much as a duets record, radiating warmth and connectivity in the ProTools age. In America post-9/11, a seasoned demographic had been flocking back to reassuring roots music, with Burnett’s *O Brother...* soundtrack as a key starting point. In that context, *Raising Sand* landed in the right place at the right time.

It also arrived at a moment of unforeseen visibility for its male protagonist. On September 12, 2007, a month before release, Led Zeppelin responded to the passing on July 31 of their mentor at Atlantic Records, Ahmet Ertegun, by announcing their reunion for a tribute concert at London’s O2 Arena which would take place on December 10. Consequently, Plant spent much of the *Raising Sand* campaign fielding enquiries about Zeppelin’s longer-term prospects. His increasingly frustrated reply was that the show, however magnificently it had unfolded, was a one-off.

“I just was longing to sing those harmonies, which I’d had drilled into my head by Miss Krauss,” he says today, “then the next thing I know I’m singing in the style that I hadn’t actually envisaged going anywhere near again.”

So, technically, singing on a full Zeppelin tour felt unfeasible?

“You know, Alison?” he explains to Krauss via his laptop screen. “In England, when you know you’re going off and not coming home, you say, ‘Don’t wait up!’ It’s like you’re not going back, you’re on a new path. That’s really what us two did, with a great deal of zigzags and fun.”

As they sang on *Killing The Blues*, sales of *Raising Sand* made Krauss and Plant look like they were “swinging the world by the tail”, but touring *Raising Sand* wasn’t without its teething troubles. On their opening night in Louisville, Kentucky, in April ’08, Krauss says she “left the stage in a huff”, because she wasn’t used to the amplification their music required. They quickly found their feet, and, buoyed by arena bookings (including Wembley), and their

Grammys triumph in February 2009, exploratory sessions duly commenced for a follow-up record.

“It was like we were suddenly in a band for ever,” says Plant, “but evidently it wasn’t going to work like that. We probably dived in too soon, and needed to take a break. So, Alison went back her way, and I went mine.”

FROM THAT APPARENT IMPASSE, progress towards a *Raising Sand* sequel was incremental.

“We’d hook up when Robert came through Nashville,” says Krauss, “and when he was living in Texas, he came out to see my band, Union Station, at Austin City Limits festival. We’d constantly send songs back and forth, and talk about songs we should do.”

“For me, it came to a head when we were both on the same show with Willie Nelson,” says Plant, referring to a stop on Nelson’s Outlaw Festival in Noblesville, Indiana, in September ’19, where Union Station and his Space Shifters shared billing. “I was more or less convinced that night, that we had to make space for another go – that it would definitely be a terrible waste if we didn’t carouse again.”

During the second session in early ’20, Plant was hampered by a chest infection, which may not have been helped by an old friend, Louisiana country-rocker Lucinda Williams, and her band, staying in the same hotel and luring him to the bar every night. Can’t Let Go, a Randy Weeks song from Williams’ breakthrough 1998 album, *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road*, was apparently one of the first tunes that Plant shared with Krauss, maybe a decade ago.

Listening to *Raise The Roof*, it’s easy to infer which songs originated from him, such as New Orleans soul belter Betty Harris’s Trouble With My Lover, and another mid-’60s R&B nugget, Searching For My Baby by Bobby Moore & The ➤

that at one point I was gonna chuck out all the responses that Sandy eventually sang because there was too much clutter. Originally, I was trying to sing both lots, and it sounded like Mork & Mindy. Then I went, “Wait a minute!” We knew Fairport really well, and Sandy was a good friend, so she just came in and killed it. It wasn’t even a one-day thing – it was a one-hour thing. It’s a great track, and Jimmy’s mandolin and the studio effects on it are really, really good.

Along with the ethereal moments, there’s some of the heaviest rock ever committed to vinyl. Your friend John Bonham was on fire on Black Dog, Rock And Roll and When The Levee Breaks.

Bonzo and I used to drive down together to Headley Grange – just enthusiastic about getting there and not knowing what was going to happen, writing-wise. Jimmy always had ideas, some of them were born and raised on the spot. Everybody had something they were bringing to the party, and we just listened and played.

Bonzo relished it. He had all this sound in his cans, from Jimmy’s bank of pedals, maybe a baritone guitar with reverb – something deep and melodramatic that would make people go, “Wow!” So he could hear all that, and sometimes he would just *laugh* in the middle of a take, like, “Grrrrraah-hahaha!” It was just incredible.

How was his style evolving?

He played less around that time. We know all the clichés, that it’s what you don’t play that makes it work. It was definitely, *(clenches fist)* ‘Take that!’ But it might also be a little bit of Alphonse Mouzon, it might be a touch of Bernard Purdie. He was listening to all kinds of stuff, watching Buddy Rich shit, and thinking, “Hmm, that might be a bit busy!”

Lamp of truth: (from top) Led Zeppelin IV label; ‘The Hermit’ sleeve illustration; US singles.



Excess baggage: Plant enjoys a close encounter at the Continental Hyatt House, Los Angeles, July 1973 with (from left) the 'snake man', Led Zep publicist BP Fallon and friend Vanessa Gilbert.

“MOST MUSICIANS FORM A BAND, THEN THEY STAY IN THE BAND UNTIL IT’S OVER – 20 YEARS, 30 YEARS, 50 YEARS. IT’S LIKE PEOPLE HANGING ONTO A LIFE RAFT.” *Plant*

◀ Rhythm Aces, which, says Plant, “I must’ve sung a million times at school – I’m at home there.”

As well as recherché R&B, Plant also brought two choice Brit-folk selections. A fleshed-out reading of Bert Jansch’s *It Don’t Bother Me* offers an explicit nod to the inspirational Glaswegian folk guitarist. Famously, the instrumental *Black Mountain Side* off Led Zeppelin’s debut LP left its debt to Jansch’s reading of the Irish traditional *Down By Blackwaterside* uncredited, prompting a frosty war of words at that time.

It turned out Jansch was “a really nice guy, definitely knowable,” says Plant today, who made good on the slight in later life, and performed at a posthumous tribute to Jansch at the Royal Festival Hall in December 2013. That night, he actually played *Go Your Way, My Love*, by Jansch associate Anne Briggs, which is also rousingly rocked up on *Raise The Roof*.

Maybe Plant is one of life’s bridge-builders. With *Raising Sand* and *Raise The Roof*, he’s doing it with songs.

“When I spent that first year or so with Alison,” he muses, “I was so amazed by America. I thought I’d got America down, but here was this whole world of country music I’d not encountered. That’s the great thing about me and Alison – we’re ably supported by a world of beautiful music that one or other of us doesn’t know too much about.”

“I grew up with the songs of rural America,” says Krauss, for her part, “but it’s been amazing to hear the stuff Robert’s introduced me to, which are often

the blues versions of things that I knew from growing up on the bluegrass side – the same stories of the droughts and the natural disasters of the dustbowl, the sharecroppers’ connection to the land, and love, loss and death. It’s very raw in both styles of music. Mine came from Jimmy Rogers, his came from Robert Johnson.”

OUTSIDE THE PUB FOR A BREATH, PLANT gestures along the riverbank and reveals that earlier in the day he was out tending to the slice of it adjoining his property. “That bindweed is a hell of a thing,” he says, before pointing towards his school in Stourbridge, a mere 30 miles away. Between professional manoeuvres, even in his mid-’70s pomp, he has rarely ventured far from his Worcestershire manor.

“If I cross this river now,” he explains, “I won’t see another city before Boston, Massachusetts, and I can just hide in it all, and disappear. My madness is somewhat sated, if you like, by being out there in South Shropshire, and into Radnorshire. It’s so beautiful.”

He has struggled with having his ‘madness’ – his minstrel’s wanderlust – restricted by Covid. Recording for *Raise The Roof* was actually conducted prior, mostly across “two rapid visits to Nashville” either side of Christmas 2019. “Since then, I haven’t been at home so much since my GCEs,” he notes. His wings clipped, Plant spent much of 2020-21 organising his personal archive [see panel]. He kept in trim vocally via his country-folk sideline *Saving Grace*, which he gamely denominates as “Appalachian



Getty (3)



mountain stuff played by eager British people who'll have a large gin and tonic before the encore." Such fortification didn't save a run of early-summer '21 dates from falling foul of the lockdown extension.

Between mouthfuls of grilled seabass in his local's garden restaurant, Plant concedes his tribulations were nothing compared to many. He is surprisingly self-effacing company (shyly, he admits he wept when he was presented with an Americana Music Association UK award in 2018 by Wolverhampton Wanderers' '90s striker, Steve Bull) despite a wary undercurrent of 'don't mention the War'. So it's rather surprising when he suddenly starts talking about Led Zeppelin.

"We were growing in the '70s," he reflects, at a mention of that decade. "It was powerful and sensitive. There was a huge amount of endeavour in those days in Led Zep – up to a point. And that point was probably just exhaustion, and repetition, and there was no therapy for anything. You just kept going. If somebody didn't want to keep going, it would be awkward on the other three. And if somebody else didn't want to keep going..." He sighs. "Circumstances change. We were all really young then, so what's to lose?"

After the passing of his closest friend in the ranks, drummer John Bonham, in 1980, after which Zep activities ceased, there was quite probably, as he says, 'no therapy', either for that tragic bereavement, or for the calamities that befell him personally in the preceding years: in 1975 he and his wife Maureen suffered debilitating injuries in a car crash on the Greek island of Rhodes, curtailing Zep's heavy-touring regimen; two years later the couple lost their son Karac, aged five, to a gastric virus.

That succession of traumas, all under the fiercest public scrutiny, prompted Plant, in his ensuing solo music, to take flight from anything remotely Zeppelin-esque, as he released a series of critically derided albums, which he concedes haven't dated well.

"I've had a career with so many terrible moments in it," he says. "Just rubbish, a lot of it. In the '80s, I was trying to convince people that I still had something going on, pompadouring around in leather pants with a mullet, when really I wanted to join the Angelic Upstarts! I was free to fail. I wasn't a free transfer exactly, the label stuck with me, but I was a man out of step with what was going on. (Sighs) I've got so much to be apologetic about."

THERE WAS A TURNING POINT ON 1993's *Fate of Nations*, he says, when "I suddenly found I had enough *cojones* to approach Richard Thompson and [UK hurdy-gurdyist] Nigel Eaton, and start lifting the music and the intention, and actually get a grip, and grow up."

Plant's reunion with Zep guitarist Jimmy Page for the following year's MTV-occasioned *Unledded* project remains a proud moment, thanks to its acknowledgment of Zeppelin's Eastern influences (their classic songs enhanced by a Moroccan string band and an Egyptian orchestra), but when it gradually led him back into enor-modomes ("they're so foul"), he bailed.

His post-millennial career has been about indulging his World Traveller tastes with his unfolding group Strange Sensation, AKA Sensational Space Shifters, with intermittent left-turns into rootsy explorations such as Band Of Joy, a mid-'60s group name he reactivated in 2010 to work with *Raising Sand* touring guitarist ➤

The Secret Life Of Plant

During his unplanned 18 months at home, Plant explored his personal archive, unearthing music "from every era". *Andrew Perry reports.*

IT'S BEEN A rite of passage under Covid: with nothing better to do, there's been a lot of rummaging in lofts, discovering boxes of papers and crusty old cassette tapes. Unlike ourselves, however, a musician of Robert Plant's vintage and magnitude is more likely to discover items of priceless interest.

"It's old recordings, unreleased stuff, posters, reviews, letters of revelation, photographs, everything," he says. "There's everything from 1966 onwards. But I'd not thrown open the trunks before. The lids had never come off."

As recently revealed in the opening episode of Season IV of Plant's *Digging Deep* podcast, one mindboggling artefact from 1966-67 came in epistolary form.

"I found a very sweet letter from my mum, addressed to me at my [now] ex-wife Maureen's home, when we were 18. And I hadn't opened it! When I did so, it said that everything was OK, I could go home now, I could take up the job at the accountants as planned, and that Sue was waiting for me... It was like, oh shit! Imagine if I had opened it at the time – would I have gone back?"

He sighs wistfully, reflecting on those days when he abandoned his 'straight' girlfriend, Sue, and a settled, parentally approved path, in favour of a 'rock life' with Maureen Wilson, whom he'd met outside a postponed Georgie Fame concert. He continues, "Jimmy and I wrote a song called *Ten Years Gone*, and all the lyrics were about that girl – the first girl I ever loved!"

Amidst a horde of forgotten tapes, Plant has found tracks recorded in an unlikely hook-up

with Trevor Horn's synthesizer duo, Buggles.

"They were writing for Grace Jones at the time [circa 1985's *Slave To The Rhythm*], with [co-writer] Bruce Woolley. I didn't really know what to do after about 1984-85. Richie Hayward had joined us from Little Feat, who played great; the band was good and played some pretty stuff, but I had to go off and try and do something sparkly, so I went all over the place.

"At that time," he continues, "Dave Stewart from Eurythmics was a really big help. He introduced me to a German guy called Robert Crash who had this group, *Psychotic Tanks*, and he was just something else, in this studio in Paddington, in a plastic raincoat. Two tracks were turned into *Why*, and *Dance On My Own* on [1988's] *Now And Zen*. But the demos, with an early drum machine and his insane guitar playing, with the greatest vocal sound in the world, in an eight-quid-an-hour studio – they're just so brilliant!"

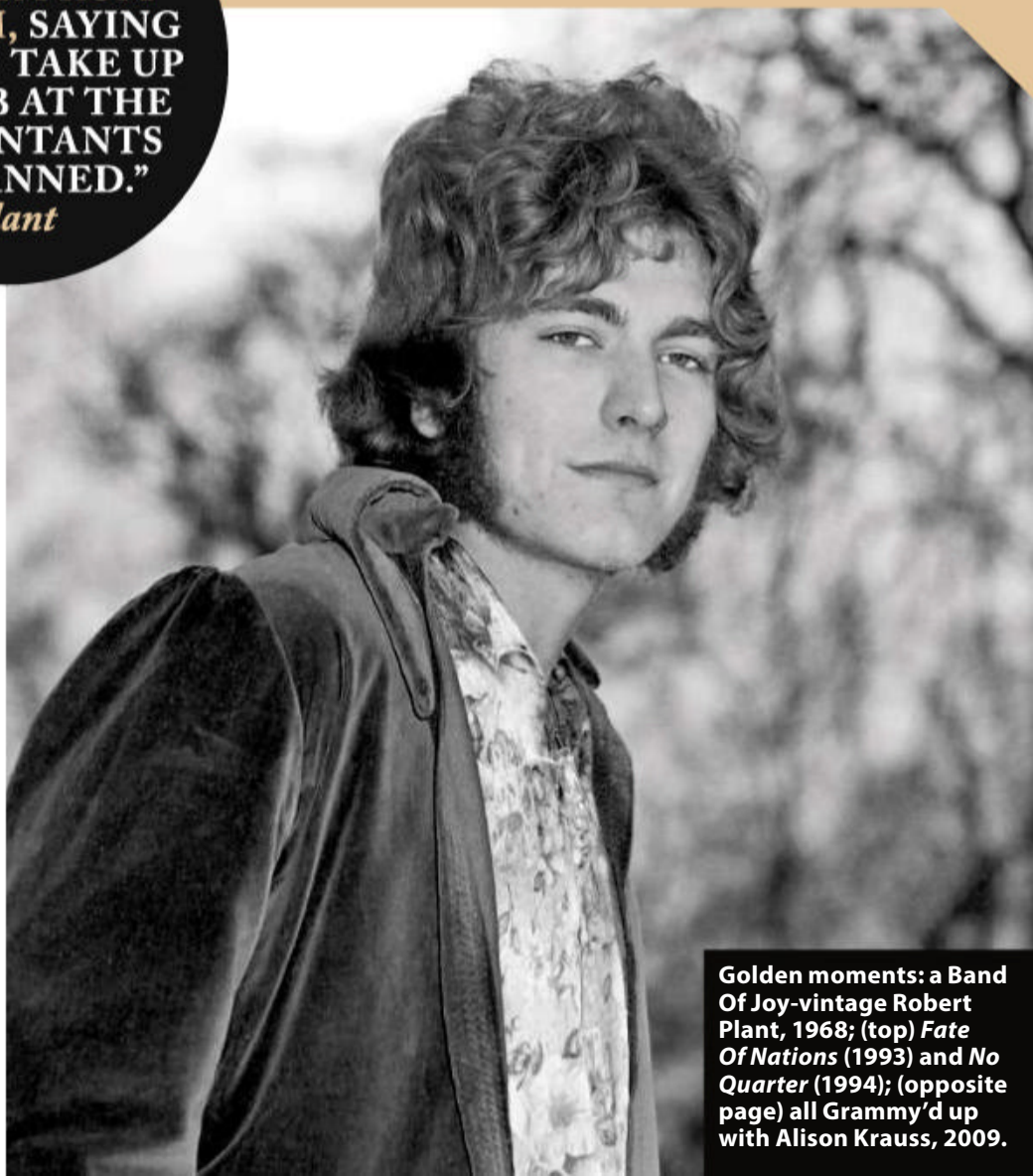
These, according to Plant, are just the tip of the iceberg. "There's a load of stuff that's unheard," he says, "from every era and period and combination of musicians that I've worked with."

There's one combination of musicians fans the world over would be particularly interested in...

"Well, they should be!" Plant mischievously replies. "And maybe they *would* be, but what condition they're in, I don't know. Also, how do I really know how good anything is? I just know it's there. I should get a call sooner or later..." He pauses, and smirks knowingly. "But don't worry, there's a guitarist I know, a Capricorn, who's probably got 10 times more stuff than I have."

"I FOUND A VERY SWEET LETTER FROM MY MUM, SAYING I COULD TAKE UP THE JOB AT THE ACCOUNTANTS AS PLANNED."

Plant



Golden moments: a Band Of Joy-vintage Robert Plant, 1968; (top) *Fate of Nations* (1993) and *No Quarter* (1994); (opposite page) all Grammy'd up with Alison Krauss, 2009.

“IT’S A MIRACLE, THIS ALBUM. IT’S TWO PEOPLE AT A CERTAIN TIME IN THEIR LIVES, DOING SOMETHING THAT NEITHER OF THEM EXPECTED.” *Plant*

Saving grace: Krauss and Plant in 2008; (right) *Mighty Rearranger* (2005) and *Band Of Joy* (2010).

◀ Buddy Miller, and elfin singer Patty Griffin, with whom he soon settled in Austin, Texas. “I lost my heart there,” Plant says of that short cohabitation. But he quickly found local reactions to his celebrity too intrusive, and scurried back to Worcestershire.

Band Of Joy reputedly all but completed a second album before their dissolution, and he winces at the notion of reconvening to complete it, but he clearly revels in the idea that there’s ‘nothing written in blood’ with any of his musical allies, that he’s free to roam in a way that those who’ve doggedly perpetuated their brand, like The Who and The Rolling Stones, never can.

Plant emerged from the consecutive collaborations with Krauss and Griffin if not ‘feminised’ then at least ‘sensitised’. Arguably, it was another process that had begun around *Fate Of Nations*.

“Maybe,” he says. “I’d been through enough by then, but I think there are moments, great songs, where I was trying to get what I felt into words, like That’s The Way on *Led Zeppelin III*, and The Ocean was making a point about what was actually going on with all the fences coming down at festivals – a little bit of social commentary.”

In MOJO 106 back in September 2002, Plant was tasked with compiling a tracklist for a single CD’s worth of the very best music from across his career. Presented with that tracklist today, he nods agreeably, suggesting a couple of selections from his last two Space Shifters records, then arching an eyebrow. “Just two Zeppelin tracks in there?” he says. “I’d probably add Achilles Last Stand, because that’s frightening – us at our least charming, and most proficient – a Bonzo track where nobody could even believe a human could do it.”

That song off 1976’s *Presence* dates from the beginning of Led Zeppelin’s terrible fall: Plant’s smashed-up ankle from the car crash forced him, AKA Achilles, to record much of that album in a wheelchair, and he has latterly described the song as “the sound of a man in pain”. Some Zeppelin-era wounds have been slower to heal; fans and journalists won’t let them.

“Talking to me,” he bristles, “somewhere along the line, everything goes back to the biggest thing that ever happened to me. From your angle, you have to see it like that, but there ain’t nothing really there apart from speculation.”

Does the conversation between Plant and Page go on?

“We’re 41 years into it now,” he says. “It’s a very charming question, and it comes in all languages! But the conversation doesn’t

really go on now, because that spaceship has [departed]. It’s obvious that *that* (pointing to MOJO’s CD copy of *Raising Sand*) is so different, and also has its own huge power and intensity – and goodwill, that’s the key. It’s the thing that carries great joy, and that’s what makes it tenable.

“Pro-rata,” he concludes, “with the amount of time I’ve got left, however long that is, every day is like 10 days for all I know, so I can’t waste, I can’t tarry, with anything that isn’t the proper ticket. Otherwise, I shouldn’t be doing it at all.”

MORTALITY: IT COULD HARDLY BE MORE urgently addressed than by Geeshie Wiley’s Last Kind Words Blues, a song, also, of the unbreachable chasm separating the impoverished from dignity and happiness. It defines the mood of *Raise The Roof*, a more shadowy one than *Raising Sand*’s, and one that was driven by Krauss.

“Alison likes it dark,” says T Bone Burnett. “One of her theories is that tempo has nothing to do with intensity. She’s looking for maximum intensity. She wants to slow things down.” One instance was a return dip into The Everly Brothers’ songbook on The Price Of Love, in its original form an upbeat R&B stomper from 1965. Burnett: “Alison said, ‘That’s a great song, let’s just strip it down to nothing and see how dark we can make it.’”

On their last outing together, our Anglo-American odd couple had an often scampish, gadabout air. This time, the blues aren’t so easily quashed, as songs of solitude and despair rub shoulders with one outright murder ballad (Ola Belle Reed’s You Led Me To The Wrong). “Yes,” Plant counters, “but it has a wonderful sparkle, in its sorrow. It’s much more appropriate as the years go by, to get into expressing a lyric that has gravity. That’s how I feel.”

As the evening light fades, Plant hustles MOJO out to the car-park. “My girlfriend and her mates will be here in a minute,” he explains. “She’s a Saxon, so she’s struggling with the [Celtic] locals.

“But it’s a miracle, this album,” he reflects, finally. “It’s as old as it is new – a couple of people at a certain time in their lives, doing something that neither of them expected. It’s clean. There’s no going back, no going forward, it’s just, ‘This is it, today!’” He smiles, genuinely cherishing the moment. “That’s such a relief for me, and for Alison, too.”

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MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

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“This is a sound both fearful and addictive... a cursed Lovecraftian grimoire that must be devoured.”

ANDREW MALE ON VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR. REISSUES P100

Gone your own way

Three years later than planned, Fleetwood Mac's songwriter-in-exile bares his soul on a bittersweet seventh solo album. By **Mark Blake**. Illustration by **Amy Nash**.

Lindsey Buckingham



Lindsey Buckingham

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

IN APRIL 1966, the American folk trio The Pozo-Secco Singers had a US hit with Time. Its thoughtful lyric ("Some roads are bathed in light/Some wrapped in fearful black...") belied their youth. But one of the group, future country crooner Don Williams, already sounded older than his twentysomething years.

Lindsey Buckingham has covered Time on his new album. When the original was echoing out of car radios in his hometown of Atherton, near San Francisco, Buckingham was a 16-year-old member of his high school swim team. A 1966 yearbook photo shows him posing by the pool with a sensible haircut and chiselled abs. Soon after, he joined The Fritz Rabyne Memorial Band and met their singer, his later lover and Fleetwood Mac compadre/nemesis, Stevie Nicks.

Here, Buckingham suffuses his version of Time with the wistful gravitas befitting a septuagenarian. It isn't self-pitying, just gently resigned. It's also a marker post on this highly personal solo album, his first since 2011's *Seeds We Sow*.

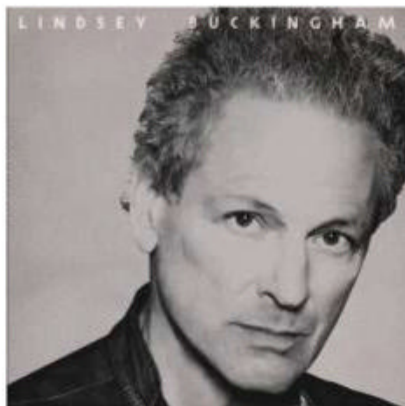
Lindsey Buckingham was good to go in 2018 but shelved when its composer's career and private life started to unravel. First, he had one of his periodic spats with Nicks, leading to his shock dismissal from Fleetwood Mac. Then he suffered a heart attack, and now he's splitting from his wife, Kristen, after 21 years of marriage.

Contrariness has always been Buckingham's forte. In 1979, he masterminded Fleetwood Mac's magnificent, self-sabotaging *Tusk* as a follow-up to *Rumours*. Now, estranged from the group and in the midst of a pandemic and impending divorce, Lindsey Buckingham has released a brilliant, charming pop record.

The 10 songs here broadly explore the challenges of maintaining a long-term relationship, "but in an academic and analytical way," Buckingham cautions. A rather academic and analytical statement which contrasts with the sing-song choruses raining down here like confetti at a wedding.

Its opening track, *Scream*, whizzes by. "Oh I love it when you scream," he implores in that familiar quaver. Screaming with pleasure or pain, though? Hard to tell in Buckingham's songs, where love and hate get jumbled up. *Scream* pairs its grown-up subject matter with a nursery-rhyme drum, sounding like it's being struck by a grinning toddler. A clever touch.

For *Tusk*, Fleetwood Mac spent \$1.4million on a bespoke studio at LA's Village Recorders, to replicate the acoustics in Buckingham's home-studio bathroom. *Scream*, like the rest of this album, sounds like it was recorded among the toothbrushes and spare toilet rolls, but it's never scuzzy or lo-fi. Instead, the listener feels like they're



"Sing-song choruses rain down here like confetti at a wedding."

chez Buckingham, watching the drama unfold. It's intimate but also voyeuristic.

I Don't Mind has the sweetest chorus, with Buckingham delivering the bouncy backing vocals, just as he did on Fleetwood Mac's hit Big Love (though most who bought the record presumed it was Stevie Nicks doing the "Oohs" and "Aahs"). Unavoidably, you wonder what this music would sound like with Nicks and her Mac partner Christine McVie's voices alongside his. Again, though, he upends the song's gleaming melody with a chilly lyric: "I don't mind, weeping willow, on my pillow," he sings imperiously.

On *The Wrong Side* suggests *Go Your Own Way* rebooted for less innocent times. The original was one of those peerless, top-down, wind-in-the-hair driving anthems. On *The Wrong Side* trades a sports car for a family-friendly station wagon and there's less hair being blown about. But Buckingham's fleet-fingered guitar solo on the run-out flashes back to 1977. He pulls off a similar trick on the

jittery tango *Swan Song*, before peeling off a closing flurry of notes at breakneck speed.

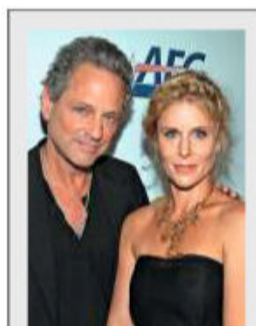
Buckingham has always relished being a one-man band: mentally marching around the studio, blowing a trombone, walloping a drum and crashing cymbals between his knees. You forget it's all him, though, on *Blind Love* and *Time*. Both sound like '60s group efforts. *Blind Love* is a graceful ballad (with a hint of his 1981 hit *Trouble* in its rolling intro) and a bittersweet lyric: "If you've been lying to me... If you've been playing a part..." It sounds like something a teenage Lindsey would have awkwardly steered his prom date around the dancefloor to.

While this music was made before the Buckingham's total domestic meltdown, listeners will spot signs – real or imagined – which suggest it isn't going to end well. *Blue Light* subverts its happy-clappy chorus with an imploring lyric about never giving in. By contrast, *Power Down* is as unambiguous as it gets. The title says it all: Buckingham switching off the machinery as a metaphor for the plug being pulled on his marriage. The words – "Said your beginning was my end" – are sung over a rubbery bass line and rattling electronic percussion, and drive his point home.

In 2016, Buckingham and his wife bought a 10-acre property in California's Santa Rosa. The song of that name here suggests their wine valley paradise wasn't all it was cracked up to be, as he urges his other half not to go there. The song's gorgeous country-flecked chorus only makes the parting of ways more poignant.

This isn't Buckingham's first rodeo. In 1984, he released a solo album, *Go Insane*, partly inspired by the slow tortuous death of a relationship. Older, wiser, he puts a cheerier spin on his heartache here. But its final track, *Dancing*, echoes that earlier work. His voice becomes the lead instrument, whispering about the "Poor little raven, has she lost her way?" over an ethereal backing. It sounds like it's sung by someone hiding in one room while their partner packs their suitcases in another.

Solo Buckingham has often showcased the struggle between art and commerce. Not here. More than any solo album before, this one evokes his best work with you know who; its songs as bright as the California sun glinting off a rock star's swimming pool, but still tinged with sadness. "Go with the flow and keep a sense of humour," is Lindsey Buckingham's current maxim for life. You wonder if Fleetwood Mac realise what they're missing.



BACK STORY: FAMILY MAN

Released as his marriage to Kristen Messner (above, with LB) comes to an end, the songs on *Lindsey Buckingham* explore their domestic ups and downs. "You have to come away from things with a level of acceptance and be happy with what you've got," says Buckingham. "There's a 20-year age difference between my wife and I. I didn't start raising a family until late. I was 48 when my eldest son was born. I saw a lot of people I knew try and be parents and spouses and rock'n'rollers and get screwed up. I'm glad I waited."

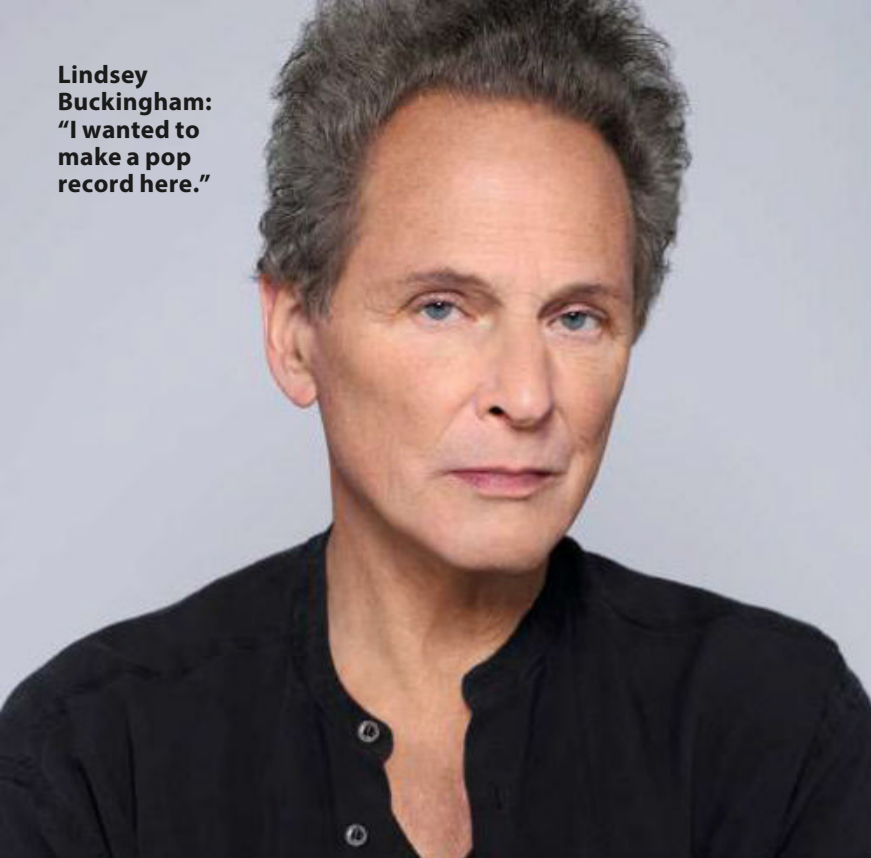
Getty

LINDSEY SPEAKS! BUCKINGHAM ON BAND, BRAND AND MARRIAGE...



Ahsh

Lindsey Buckingham: "I wanted to make a pop record here."



"There has been this sequence of strange events..."

Lindsey Buckingham speaks to Mark Blake.

You recorded this long-player three years ago. Were you tempted to change any of it, considering what has happened since?

"Nothing's really changed on the record. But there has been this sequence of strange events that kept it from seeing the light of day."

Starting with your parting of the ways with Fleetwood Mac in 2018?

"I did the record with Christine McVie [*Lindsey Buckingham Christine McVie* in 2017] and wanted to go straight on to this. Fleetwood Mac wanted to tour. So we ended up going in a direction I didn't see coming [Buckingham was fired]. Stevie [Nicks] orchestrated that, and the others were stuck in the middle. I thought at this point in our careers it doesn't speak well of the legacy. So I had to restructure everything. But, hey, that's rock'n'roll..."

Then you had a heart operation in 2019.

"Yes, as soon as I got back into the idea of putting the album out, I started having health problems. So that kicked the whole thing down even further."

Is it liberating making a solo album rather than a Fleetwood Mac album?

"On one level, yes. But my solo work is often more esoteric, and you lose nine out of 10 listeners because you're disconnecting from their idea of what Fleetwood Mac is. But I wanted to make a pop record here."

Is it fair to call this a relationship album?

"I wrote these songs when my wife and I had been together a long time. Things drift. Suddenly, you're at a point where everyone is pulling to reboot the entire scenario of domestic life. That's something that happens. So while a lot of these songs are celebrating long-term relationships, they're doing it in a non-romanticised way."

A song such as *Blind Love* sounds like a throwback to The Beach Boys in the '60s. Are you getting nostalgic?

"I can be nostalgic. But I also try not to be too imitative. I could never write a song as good as Brian Wilson. On *Blind Love*, I was actually thinking of Sam Cooke, but it could just as easily have been The Beach Boys."

You are touring with your own band during summer 2021, but could you see yourself performing with Fleetwood Mac again?

"Of course. It would be so appropriate for the five of us to go out again, even if you want to call it a farewell tour. I didn't see the last shows [Fleetwood Mac's 2019 tour with Mike Campbell and Neil Finn] but I heard it was a little generic, like a covers band. That's fine, because there's always a faction of people who are coming for the brand, per se, and aren't going to differentiate in terms of members as long as Stevie is up there. But it would be great for us to share it one last time. I know Mick [Fleetwood] and Christine would love that to happen. Wait and see."



Steve Gunn

★★★★★

Other You

MATADOR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Timeless songcraft and psychedelic guitar sorcery meet on Gunn's sixth.

A former Kurt Vile sideman with a slew of experimental releases as a vagabond instrumentalist and itinerant collaborator behind him, Steve Gunn's sixth studio album strikes the happiest balance yet between his songwriting – lucid, tranquil, uncluttered, and unforced – and his mercurial gifts as a guitarist. *Other You's* songs are hushed, tender things, chamber pop miniatures and acoustic shuffles shaded by translucent synths and sharpened into the sort of playful pop that's a timeless pleasure, while suggesting a darker edge. His vocals, pitched somewhere between a burr and a whisper, hang back and play cool, while his guitar-playing is incandescent, psychedelic and consistently inspired. When these two elements spark off each other just right – like on the graceful, mystic, Nick Drake-ish *On The Way*, or *Other You*, with its dreamlike coda – they yield music that is dizzyingly beautiful, but never precious.

Stevie Chick



Afterlight

★★★★★

Afterlight

AFTERLIGHT. [CD/DL](#)

The horror of domestic abuse laid painfully bare, by Thea Gilmore's new alias.



After 19 albums recorded under her own name, English singer-songwriter

Thea Gilmore has reinvented herself as Afterlight. The catalyst for the change is not a pleasant one; for years, she says, she has been the victim of sustained domestic abuse. In spite of its redemptive title, *Afterlight* reveals in painful detail the physical and mental ordeal she has hidden for too long. Whether she's being direct on *Of All The Violence I Have Known* ("I've known the harm of a hand through the air... the tightening of a fist in my hair") or more oblique for *26 Letters* ("26 letters to tell you I'm scared"), it's heart-breaking and shocking. There is too much horror in these songs to unpack with the

requisite care here, and sadly *Afterlife* will speak deeply to far too many women (and men). But with luck, it will also give them hope and courage.

Andy Fyfe



Tito Jackson

★★★★★

Under Your Spell

GULF COAST. [CD/DL](#)

Excellent follow-up to 2016's *Tito Time*.



The guests are head-turning on this second solo record by the Jackson 5/

Jacksons guitarist and singer – Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff come out of retirement to pen *All In The Family Blues*, a deliciously creamy duet with former O'Jays vocalist Eddie Levert; Stevie Wonder wails harmonica on *Love One Another*, the album's first single and stand-out, a Sly-like #BLM future anthem; George Benson solos on a magnificent cover of B.B. King's *Rock Me Baby* which also features King's daughter Claudette on vocals; Bobby Rush, Tito's brother Marlon Jackson and Kenny Neal also join in. Despite the impressive roll call, Tito Jackson's rich voice and fluid guitar licks still dominate the album as he delivers messages of love, peace and civil rights in a funk blues setting that's effective and suits him very well indeed.

Lois Wilson



Wanda Jackson

★★★★★

Encore

BIG MACHINE/BLACKHEART. [CD/DL](#)

The Queen of Rockabilly signs off in style.



Few artists have a recording career spanning seven decades, and fewer still would be capable of delivering such an assured and powerful final LP as this. Writing and performing in collaboration with a slew of female singers including Joan Jett and Angaleena Presley, Jackson reflects back on her life with her late husband Wendell Goodman, and such thoughts

also seem to have inspired the beautifully pitched cover of Johnny Tillotson's country ballad *It Keeps Right On A-Hurtin'*. *Two Shots* drives along with a Mystery Train-style shuffle, *Treat Me Like A Lady* flips between '70s funk sections and late-night soul, while heartfelt closing track *That's What Love Is* repays the price of admission all on its own. Jackson is in magnificent voice throughout, and if this really turns out to be her valedictory album, it's a very fine way to leave the stage.

Max Décharné



The Bug

★★★★★

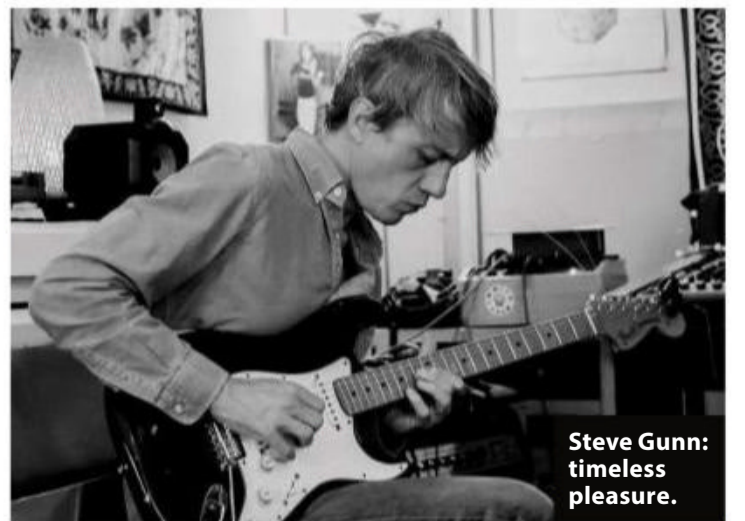
Fire

NINJA TUNE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Kevin Martin puts his Bug armour back on for a ragga-hop bloodbath.

Prolific producer Kevin Martin likes to mix it up, with recent years' output including the no-beats poetic heaviness of King Midas Sound's *Solitude*, his dark matter-ambient soundtrack for *Solaris*, and *In Blue*, a frigid tech-dub collaboration with Dis Fig. But you suspect he's happiest when the meter's in the red, the bass is sternum-bursting and the beats rain down as if from an expert pugilist. Following on in form, theme and mood from past triumphs *London Zoo* and *Angels & Devils*, *Fire* collides ragga, grime and hip-hop with London/Kingston/Philadelphia/beyond microphone fiends including Flowdan, Manga Saint Hilare and FFSYTHO. City pressure, the military-industrial complex, social injustice, ganja and plague/lockdown frustration are soundtracked by city-sized industrial noise and merciless rhythm. After the condemnations, purging and exorcisms, the final track features Roger Robinson's words on the Grenfell Tower disaster, and is devastating.

Ian Harrison



Steve Gunn: timeless pleasure.



Car trouble: Amyl And The Sniffers leave home (from left) Amy Taylor, Bryce Wilson, Gus Romer, Dec Martens.

Thunder down under

Second album from Melbourne's most rowdy. By **Keith Cameron**.

Amyl And The Sniffers

★★★★★

Comfort To Me

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

"I WANT to get out of here," Amy Taylor bristles on the super-catchy Hertz. "If you love me – hire me a car!" Anyone who's seen Amyl And The Sniffers and marvelled at Taylor's anarchic brand of crowd control can well imagine her bridling at Australia's tough version of lockdown. Conceived with the quartet confined in Melbourne after two years on tour, *Comfort To Me* heralds Hurricane Amy's vengeful return. "Don't leave me alone," she warns on opener Guided By Angels, as the band's sticklebacked raw powerage twists and shapes like a fist through a wall. "Cuz when I can't find you, I search..."

Amyl still occupy a scrubland where various hard rock subgenres mongrelise merrily – a current Sniffers fave are New York hardcore band Warthog, essentially Motörhead chasing the Ramones – but it's

a wilder, darker ride than 2019's self-titled full-length debut, which was itself a big sonic upgrade on the snotty street-hassle of early EP blasts like I'm Not A Loser. This time, producer Dan Luscombe, a veteran of Australian moodists The Drones and Blackeyed Susans, can wield a lighter touch, because the Sniffers now flex serious road-muscle, in particular the Gus Romer/Bryce Wilson rhythm section. On Choices, Amy's beautifully haughty "Ah, stuff ya!" summons a blast of precision torqued velocity, from which she unleashes her latest bespoke feminist manifesto: "My choice, my own/ My voice, my own/My body, my own/I own it, I own it."

While personal and sexual politics were always implicit within Taylor's bover girl workouts, her words have grown tougher and sharper, the serpentine flow on Laughing worthy of Thee Head Grrrl Kathleen Hanna. Capital is an unanticipated detour into vaguely Marxist theory, rapping on the oppression of Indigenous Australians ("Of course they have disdain for this place"). Not every gear-shift succeeds: Knifey calls out



misogynist violence but its message wilts amid a doomy riff that never delivers. The closing Snakes, however, is magnificent, a full-bore declaration of working-class roots from this proud former Independent Grocers of Australia employee. "I like work more than education," she spits, "Doesn't mean that I am stupid."

Of course, what makes Amyl And The Sniffers such a great band is the acute intelligence they apply to the noble art of what Amy would term "gettin' rowdy". When guitarist Dec Martens locks into the heads-down no-nonsense outback boogie of Don't Need A Cunt (Like You To Love Me), it's a carefree, care-less noise worthy of Cosmic Psychos, Melbourne's legendary 'granddaddies of grunge', whose classic Can't Come In hangs like a blessing over the levitational Security: Amy demands entrance to a pub ("I'm not looking for trouble/I'm looking for love... I swear I'm not that drunk!") while the boys combust like The Damned after bagging a sponsorship from Victoria Bitter.

Skin-shedding, lethal, self-sufficient and cool: no wonder Amy Taylor digs snakes. With *Comfort To Me*, she proves she can be whoever she wants, while the Sniffers confound preconceptions of how great a rude and righteous rock'n'roll band can still be. "Everyone is waving at the window," Amy exclaims amid Hertz's joyride. "It's like they're excited we're here." Too right mate.



Star spotters: Aaron, Justin and friends of the Big Red Machine.

“Shining a light on childhood.”

Aaron Dessner speaks to **Stevie Chick**.

You're a habitual collaborator...

“I’m just wired that way. I’ve always played music with my twin brother Bryce, since we were little kids in the basement. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve only grown as an artist through collaborating. Every time you work with someone new, you put yourself in a position of vulnerability. But it’s an incredibly important part of being an artist, taking that risk and jumping off that cliff. You just need courage to stick your neck out.”

What makes your partnership with Justin Vernon work?

“He’s an incredibly talented musician. But, most importantly, he gives me so much encouragement to keep exploring. And Big Red Machine is as much an excuse to hang out and mix it up with your friends as it is an actual band. We like to think of it almost like a laboratory that we invite friends into. We made the first record almost by accident, but this one was more intentional and more ambitious. We wanted this community of voices to sing these songs, which are like chapters of the same book, featuring different characters.”

You sing for the first time on this album – what took you so long?

“I love what strong, charismatic singers like [The National bandmate] Matt Berninger, or Justin, or Taylor [Swift] bring to my songs. But when I shared Brycie with Justin and Taylor, they were really moved by my

voice, and Justin started pushing me to sing more. And when I played Ghosts Of Cincinnati to Taylor, she helped me finish it; she had this melody for me to sing. I don’t imagine I’m going to become some great singer. But it is nice to stop hiding out in the shadows.”

What’s the story behind Brycie?

“When I was a teenager, I struggled with severe depression. And Bryce really was there for me. It was shocking to him to see me decline. He held me up, he did my homework, and he was very caring. So the song is really a love letter to my brother, thanking him for always being there, and hoping we get to grow old together. That’s where the album title comes from, really, a line from the opening song, Latter Days, which Anaïs Mitchell wrote after hearing Brycie. And the album sleeve is Bryce and me and our sister with our great-grandmother Stella, who was 100 years old when that picture was taken in 1979. Families don’t always stay together, and we have had family trauma, we’ve lost people along the way. The core idea of the record is shining a light on childhood, looking back to before you made mistakes or overextended yourself, and trying to find a remedy. It’s something that I recognise in my relatives, in my parents, and in myself.”



Tools you can trust

Second instalment of Justin Vernon and Aaron Dessner’s all-star team-up. By **Stevie Chick**

Big Red Machine

★★★★★

How Long Do You Think It’s Gonna Last?

37D03D/JAGJAGUWAR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

COLLABORATION COMES as second nature to Aaron Dessner. Along with his work as songwriter and multi-instrumentalist with The National, Dessner’s CV is studded with team efforts such as Dark Was The Night, the AIDS benefit he helmed in 2008, and his star-packed Grateful Dead covers project, Day Of The Dead. His PEOPLE festival in Berlin, meanwhile, encourages kindred and disparate spirits to form new creative units together. And then there’s Big Red Machine. With its roots in a track of the same name the pair penned for Dark Was The Night, the project unites Dessner with Bon Iver’s Justin Vernon and – on this, their second album together – an eclectic guest list of friends sharing vocals and songwriting duties, including Fleet Foxes’ Robin Pecknold, Sharon Van Etten and diamond-selling pop phenomenon Taylor Swift (whose recent shift towards alt-folk was shepherded by Dessner).

More intimate and carefully crafted than 2018’s experimental predecessor, the stellar

cast operate less like celebrity cameos and more like fellow travellers walking briefly in-step, their contributions of substance. Dessner and Vernon adapt to draw the best from their guests, with a directness that perfectly suits Swift’s succinct country-pop instincts on Renegade, or softening focus for the dulcet swoon of Pecknold’s Phoenix. And while always remaining anchored to their native universe of midlife melancholy and folk rock uplift, the duo often let the outsiders lead, an approach that takes them in some brilliant, unexpected directions, not least the ecstatic, percussive punk-funk cacophony of Easy To Sabotage, Vernon’s urgent Auto-Tune-drenched duet with Naeem (formerly known as Spank Rock).

But for all the potency of these guest contributions, *How Long...* is still very much Dessner and Vernon’s album. Throughout, Vernon switches fluidly between his natural voice and the digitally manipulated vocal techniques he’s been exploring on recent Bon Iver releases, furthering those idiosyncratic methods. His vocodered croon sounds like a kaleidoscopic melodica amid the muted saxophones and gentle piano of Reese, and is artfully distorted and obscure, like *Riot*-era Sly Stone, on Hoping Then. Dessner even takes the microphone himself, for the first time in his career, on the heartening Simon & Garfunkel-ish strum of Ghost Of Cincinnati (originally penned for Swift, but better suiting his untutored whisper), and his moving, sweetly unabashed tribute to twin brother and bandmate, Brycie.

Themes of nostalgia and loss unite these

songs, further echoed in Hutch (a gospelised tribute to late Frightened Rabbit frontman Scott Hutchison), in the teasingly out-of-reach memories of Latter Days (recorded with singer-songwriter Anaïs Mitchell). The result is a warmly autumnal, subtly adventurous set, with Dessner and Vernon’s generous, uncontrived, communal approach completing the tightrope all such collaborative projects must walk, delivering a work profoundly greater than the sum of its parts.

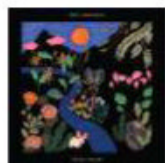
José González

★★★★

Local Valley

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Fourth album from subtle Swedish-Argentinian singer-songwriter.



"We can't know for sure what's next," sings José González wisely on Visions, a

thrum of birdsong and drowsy bee-like guitar that contemplates the possibility of utopia. There's no such uncertainty with *Local Valley* as one warm, thoughtful song follows another, protecting against any sudden shocks or unpredictable crashes. That's not to say it's dull – songs distinguish themselves with a bleaker edge (Horizons), a heavier beat (Tjomme), a glitchy groove (Swing), all as fresh and natural as if he'd wandered out into the garden to pick them like a handful of greens. The mood is set, almost in amber, by González's meditative, unshowy voice and delicately knotted guitar; he even revisits Line Of Fire, originally recorded with his band Junip. *Local Valley* has no lows, nor any thrilling highs, but it's an even, easy pleasure from start to finish.

Victoria Segal



Alexis Taylor

★★★★

Silence

ORBISTOR. DL/LP

Hot Chip lead singer goes to his quiet place; finds solo concept album.

Just after Alexis Taylor began formulating a record musing on the concept of silence – which would eventually become this, his sixth solo album – the Hot Chip frontman developed tinnitus in one ear. Rather than deter him, it galvanised Taylor into recording *Silence* just as the world fell quieter than it had for several lifetimes. The resulting songs are poignant and brittle, matching Taylor's inimitable falsetto. Spare in instrumentation, they're as far from the vivacious dance pop of Hot Chip as you can imagine. Melting Away is merely piano, cello and three doleful chords. I Look To Heaven adopts the tone of an unadorned, nonconformist hymn, one of several times that the avowedly non-religious Taylor touches on spirituality. And while the Air-like vibraphone and hazy aura enveloping Dying In

Heaven is something of an outlier, it too wields a powerful simplicity. By embracing the space between, Taylor has created a meditative, magical record.

Stephen Worth



Low

★★★★

Hey What

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

More songs of faith and devotion from Duluth couple's album 13.



Hey What is Low's third successive album with Bon Iver

producer BJ Burton, whose digital clipping, distortion and compression techniques wrought such a transformative impact upon 2018's *Double Negative* that the band occasionally seemed like guests on their own record. Here, however, the information exchange attains a near perfect equilibrium between sanctified melody and distress signals, as per Days Like These, a mini-suite with one a cappella verse, another of exultant noise, then a long diaphanous coda. Mimi Parker and Alan Sparhawk's sepulchral voices stand resolute amid the turbulence, invoking a succession of peak Low moments: Disappearing's cyclical waveform acting as a sequel of sorts to 1996's *Over The Ocean* ("That disappearing horizon, brings cold comfort to my soul"), or Don't Walk Away, a post-apocalyptic Can't Help Falling In

Love. After almost 30 years documenting the bittersweet mysteries of life, this one's for the angels.

Keith Cameron



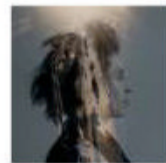
Martina Topley-Bird

★★★★

Forever I Wait

AWAL. DL/LP

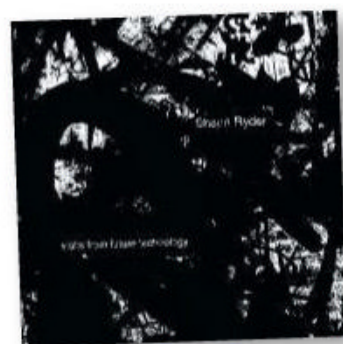
Trip-hop pioneer's first LP since 2010. Massive Attack's Del Naja and others guest.



Martina Topley-Bird's fourth album was almost finished when her (and

Tricky's) daughter Mazy took her own life in 2019. The title of *Forever I Wait* refers to the singer's patient efforts to override previous compromises born from parenthood duties and questionable advice, but you can imagine it also stands for an aching absence. What remains is Topley-Bird adopting trip-hop's narcotic, edgy trademark for further adventures in soul, torch song, electronica, dub; whatever best conveys the sentiment behind one-word titles such as Collide, Blood and Love. The teenager who gilded Tricky's epochal *Maxinquaye* is now in her forties, and her voice's levity and heaviness more clearly reveal a love of Billie Holiday. This feverish record ends beautifully with Rain, just voice, strings and hope: "One day while walking in the rain/I found my path along the way."

Martin Aston.



Shaun Ryder

★★★★

Visits From Future Technology

SWRX RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

'Lost' album from Salford's irascible baggy bard is a warped pop keeper.

Reduced to trading ghostly drug-brags over lukewarm dance beats on 2003's solo debut *Amateur Night In The Big Top*, its sequel (reputedly rediscovered while spring cleaning) is the polar opposite. Whether rapping over low-slung funkies Mummo Jumbo and Close The Dam or getting wistfully nostalgic over the shuffling Turn Off The Air, *Visits...* finds the "bouncing baby bighead" singer-turned-reality-TV-star's knotty poetics and score-settling absurdisms at their tightest, odes to tea and toast riding a slinking jumble of funk, dub, psych and hip-hop, with a couple of unexpected gravelly detours into the blues. And if the music feels a little underpowered in places, the dreck count is nil on a party-starter on par with *Pills 'N' Thrills*-era Happy Mondays and early Black Grape.

Andy Cowan

W. H. Lung

★★★★

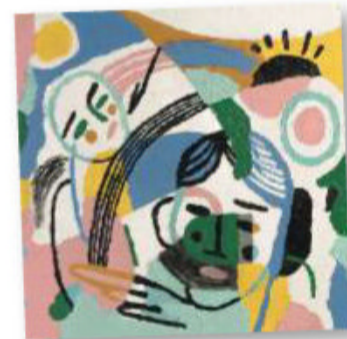
Vanities

MELODIC. CD/DL/LP

Artful, invigorating take on what helped to pack '90s dancefloors.

Vanities ends with Kaya, a rave-pop mover pitched between the Section 25 of *From The Hip* and the dance-floor insistence of Andrew Weatherall at his most anthemic. On the way to this ecstatic climax, the second album from Manchester's W.H. Lung gradually moves away from the motorik-infused doggedness perfected on 2019's *Incidental Music* to a less impressionistic music; one aimed at the feet. Early on, Calm Down and Pearl In The Palm nod to their debut but by the album's midpoint it's clear a decision has been made to not repeat what came before. But this more direct W. H. Lung is still about righteous testimony. "It's only holy when we're together" proclaims frontman Joe Evans on ARPi. Showstopper conjures up the "god of dried apricots". *Vanities* artily refines an exhilarating brand of up-front electro-dance.

Kieron Tyler



Moor Mother

★★★★

Black Encyclopedia Of The Air

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

A flurry of co-conspirators ghost in and out of Philadelphia poet's mesmerising nocturnal emissions.

A VISUAL artist, activist and co-leader of free-jazzers Irreversible Entanglements, Moor Mother is just one facet of Camae Ayewa's highly involved CV. Alongside Swedish producer Olof Melander she dreams up a shady alien sound world where wayward samples merge with scattered jazz licks, gurgling synths and live drums (not dissimilar to Zeroh). Within it, Moor Mother assumes different guises, wreathing together spirituals, poems and spoken words, her voice often stretched, manipulated and rendered unearthly, arousing a sort of fevered hallucinatory boom-bap in



Moor Mother, seething with hot-tempered fury.

cacophonous rap-offs with Elucid, Pink Siifu and Lojii that often seethe with hot-tempered fury. It's a wilful shuffle through the space-time

continuum, where powerful pearls of wisdom about memory, the future and black injustice pierce the sonic murk.

Andy Cowan

Sturgill Simpson:
revelling in
the confidence
success bestows.



The Dood abides

Kentucky son continues his wondrous bluegrass odyssey. By **Andy Fyfe**.

Sturgill Simpson

★★★★★

The Ballad Of Dood And Juanita

HIGH TOP MOUNTAIN/THIRTY TIGERS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

WHAT A difference a couple of Grammy nominations (and a win) make. After rootlessly drifting from high school drug dealing to the navy to failing at his first attempt to gatecrash Nashville, Sturgill Simpson is now accepted as country music's outlier present and future. So much so, in fact, that he can pretty much do as he damn pleases.

Right now, what pleases Sturgill Simpson is a bluegrass concept album about a Civil War veteran who sets out for revenge against the bandit who left him dying in the dirt after kidnapping his wife.

This isn't Simpson's first concept album. His 2014 breakthrough *Metamodern Sounds In Country Music* tried to bring traditionalism into the modern world; Grammy-winning *A Sailor's Guide To Earth* was Simpson teaching his newborn son how to navigate life; *Sound & Fury* was also an anime film.

And then there're the two *Cuttin' Grass* volumes, where Simpson re-recorded a large chunk of his back catalogue as bluegrass tunes. While not concept albums *per se*, the idea of a major artist re-recording their

songs in a different genre – not just rearranging them with an orchestra – may well be unprecedented. That his songs not just survived but actually thrived shows not only how strong Simpson's songwriting is, but also that he is revelling in the confidence success has bestowed on him.

Although his latest album's title has been in Simpson's head for years, the songs were not. Driving home after acting in Martin Scorsese's forthcoming DiCaprio/De Niro movie *Killers Of The Flower Moon* (see where success can land you?), he put Willie Nelson's *Red Headed Stranger* on the car stereo and by the journey's end he had mapped out his new concept.

In just 25 minutes the 10 songs tell the linear story of Dood (named after his late grandfather) and Juanita's separation at gunpoint, his resolve to rescue her and the peace he finds in revenge: "A man and his rifle, a mule and his hound, one in the saddle and one on the ground..." (spoiler alert: the dog dies – this is, after all, a country album).

Rather sweetly, Simpson comes full musical circle on Tex-Mex ballad *Juanita* with a guitar solo from his initial inspiration, Willie Nelson. It's a tune straight out of Marty Robbins' songbook, albeit played with the same bluegrass band who cut the *Cuttin' Grass* sessions.

The only unsatisfactory element of *The Ballad Of Dood & Juanita* is that it's too short, and how many concept albums can boast *that*? And if Sturgill Simpson was to spend the rest of his career purely as a bluegrass artist, well, that would be just fine too.



David Ferguson

★★★★

Nashville No More

FAT POSSUM. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Nashville producer makes debut album just shy of 60th birthday.



Known simply as 'Fergie' around his Nashville hometown, David Ferguson is the engineer, producer, songwriter and studio owner (sometimes all four) behind some of the city's greatest recordings. From legends Johnny Cash and John Prine to relative newcomers Margo Price, Sturgill Simpson and Jake Bugg, he's worked with more names than you've had hot grits. Possessed of a producer's voice – heartwarming, but limited rather than scorching – Fergie bounds enthusiastically through 10 covers by the likes of Lee Hazlewood, Gordon Lightfoot, Guy Clark, and Ian Tyson's oft-covered *Four Strong Winds*. The jewel, and the song he takes most care with, is Pat McLaughlin's all-but-titular *Knocking Around* Nashville, a ballad of lost love that, in Fergie's hands, becomes a lament for the days before Nashville's famed Music Row became little more than a theme park of bars and gift shops.

Andy Fyfe

Sarah Davachi

★★★★★

Antiphonals

LATE MUSIC. [CD/DL/LP/MC](#)

Canadian electroacoustic composer continues to capture ghosts in sound.



The term "antiphonal" refers to music performed by two choirs in interaction, often singing alternate musical phrases or a cantor leading a choir in call-and-response. For Sarah Davachi, this response comes in the form of sound-on-sound tape delay, 'answering' melodies created by electric organ, piano, synthesizer and mellotron. Davachi's sound-world suggests Decca, Abbey Road or Sound Techniques studios in the early '70s, her mellotron samples of flute, clarinet, recorder, oboe, French horn, and nylon-string guitar calling to mind ghost recordings by, say, Nick Drake, Tudor Lodge or David Munrow's Early Music Consort. It's about repetition modal sequencing as a site of harmonic and textural creativity, and it's an uncannily beautiful listening experience, like capturing a fragment of a fading folk song in the moment before sleep and hearing its echoes resonate and disintegrate throughout your dreams.

Andrew Male



Various

★★★

The Metallica Blacklist

BLACKENED/UNIVERSAL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Overblown tribute to their 'Black Album' on its 30th. Profits to charity!



Metallica's self-titled 1991 monolith could in theory yield a well-curated covers set that shines new light on 12 songs which, for some, have been dulled through familiarity. *The Blacklist*, alas, runs to a self-aggrandising 53 tracks. A handful work, either by overhauling the source material – My Friend Of Misery plunged into Kamasi Washington's cosmic jazz whirlpool – or because the artists sound at ease with their chosen tunes. St Vincent and Jason Isbell respectively render *Sad But True* as a robo-rock strut and swampy twang'n'roll, and in both cases you can imagine them playing these versions for fun. Same goes for hardcore punk vets OFF! slaloming through *Holier Than Thou* and Rodrigo Y Gabriela doing their acoustic instrumental flamenco with *The Struggle Within*. The other 48 selections feel forced or too like karaoke homework – the low point being a dozen mind-numbing takes on radio ballad *Nothing Else Matters*. (See Reissues page 102 for *Metallica* remastered.)

Manish Agarwal



The Felice Brothers

★★★★★

From Dreams To Dust

YEP ROC. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Ramshackle country-rock dispatches sharpened by a keen, unpredictable wit.



Americana can sometimes curdle into mawkishness, a fate The Felice Brothers evade via the indignant, acerbic sneer with which frontman Ian Felice delivers his folk rock parables. Recorded in a 19th century church, their eighth studio album finds blackly comedic visions of the apocalypse (*Jazz On The Autobahn*) rubbing ragged shoulders with far-fetched inventories (the hilarious *To-Do List*, wherein they plan to "Defy all natural laws", among other more outlandish schemes), and rousing anthems that promise to unite "Francis of Assisi" and "Fans of AC/DC" (*We Shall Live Again*). Throughout, the Brothers' riotous dust-bowl carnival sounds and Ian's pointed deadpan make for a consistently entertaining cocktail, while a mid-way turn towards melancholy – in particular *Be At Rest*, as Felice reads his own imaginary and unsentimental funeral eulogy – proves that beneath the droll veneer they really mean it, man.

Stevie Chick

The Blow Monkeys

★★★★★

Journey To You

BLOW MONKEY MUSIC. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Celebrating 40 years with strong, inviting album.



Written in what Dr Robert calls "a frenzy", this seventh long-player since the group

reformed in 2007 might just be their best. It's definitely a match for their classic '80s period, with Dr Robert's soulful croon uplifting in tone throughout. The band – the original line-up of saxist Neville Henry and bassist Mick Anker with former Galliano drummer Crispin Taylor replacing Tony Kiley – are a unifying force and there's an effortlessness to their funk groove. Dr Robert namechecks Bacharach & David as a songwriting influence on the album and there are ear worm melodies and emotional drama galore. "Forgive me for the fool I've been," he begs on centrepiece More Than A Miracle. Laden with luxuriant strings and horns and a glitter ball production created in Dr Robert's home studio in southern Andalucía, how could we not?

Lois Wilson



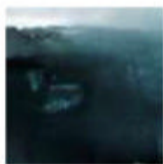
Eivind Aarset Quartet

★★★★★

Phantasmagoria
Or A Different Kind
Of Journey

JAZZLAND. [CD/DL](#)

Norwegian post-rock guitar maestro takes an immersive psychedelic trip.



Any electric guitar group that chooses to do without vocals has to work harder to tickle the ears – from The Shadows to Mogwai. Guitarist Eivind Aarset, a mainstay of the cultishly influential Nordic new music scene, does so not through blasts of look-at-me virtuosity but by building up immersive musical worlds



The Blow Monkeys: miracle workers.

from thickly stacked textures. You'll hear everything from surf guitar to spy-movie twang to Robert Fripp-style soundscaping as well as the odd thrash weave in and out of these nine mini-epics. Aarset is aided by sampling wizard Jan Bang, field recordings from John Derek Bishop (Tortusa), and on one track trumpeter Arve Henriksen, as he conjures his dreamscapes. However far out Aarset travels, he never loses touch with melody, and his ninth album as leader could be his best.

John Bungey



Gerry Rafferty

★★★★★

Rest In Blue

PLG UK. [CD/DL](#)

Posthumous release of the Baker Street man's final studio album.

Like Etta James, like Chet Baker, Gerry Rafferty had a voice that caressed the ear, every errant frequency EQ'd out by God. As his sometime Humblebums bandmate Billy Connolly has noted, moreover, Rafferty sounds better than ever on *Rest In Blue*, a work in progress from 2006 until his death in 2011. With time-served collaborators including guitarist Hugh Burns on hand, Rafferty's daughter Martha now brings her father's vision to harbour, a version of Wild Mountain Thyme that would bring tears to a glass eye and a stately cover of Richard And Linda Thompson's It's Just The Motion augmenting classy Rafferty originals such as You Are All I Want and Slow Down (wherein producer Tambala's approach makes subtle nods to Baker Street). There's a telling look in the mirror too, Still In Denial and Full Moon acknowledging Rafferty's battle with alcoholism.

James McNair

Haiku Salut

★★★★★

The Hill, The Light,
The Ghost

SECRET NAME. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Engagingly wistful fifth album from Derbyshire Dales instrumental trio.



Starting life as a series of field recordings captured in charged locations – an

abandoned house in Germany, the birdsong-framed Peak District countryside – *The Hill, The Light, The Ghost* is pitched as "a miniature exploration of sound in relation to memory". From this near-Proustian premise, multi-instrumentalists Louise Croft, Sophie Barkerwood and Gemma Barkerwood conjure nine wordless, shape-shifting essays using keyboards, electronics, guitars and orchestral instruments. Opener Wide Awake's raindrop piano and enveloping strings recall Virginia Astley's pastoral *From Gardens Where We Feel Secure*, while genre-refuting We Need These Beams marries sepulchral electric guitar to fluttering circuitry and All Watched Over By Machines Of Loving Grace, named after a Richard Brautigan poem (or perhaps a subsequent Adam Curtis documentary), layers its synths, glitchy melodies and bell-like tones into a soaring, heart-swelling crescendo – stadium ambient, if you will.

David Sheppard



James McMurtry

★★★★★

The Horses And
The Hounds

NEW WEST. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Texan troubadour's 10th studio album.



It's been six years since *Complicated Game* (2015) – McMurtry's lean, literate last album, and arguably his best, though its two predecessors *Just Us Kids* (2008) and *Childish Things* (2005) were also formidable. The times between were spent on the road, which accounts for the grit in his voice and the ease of his delivery. Most of these 10 new songs sound made for a roadhouse stage, yet the lyrics read like American short stories, with various protagonists: the man behind the wheel whose wife keeps phoning to complain (What's The Matter); the uncomplaining woman who meets a tragic end (ballad Jackie). For this LP, McMurtry went back to producer (Ross Hogarth) and guitarist (David Grissom) from his early major label albums. It's good. Not quite up to par with the last three indie label releases, but he set the bar high. Standouts: Canola Fields and Decent Man.

Sylvie Simmons

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN



On Our Own Clock

★★★★★

On Our Own Clock

MUSHROOM HOUR HALF HOUR/TOTAL
REFRESHMENT CENTRE. [DL/LP](#)

Inspiration runs rife as kindred spirits from South Africa, Senegal and London combine.



DESPITE PLANS to collaborate in person rendered null and void by you-know-what, On Our Own Clock pressed ahead with their debut regardless: files from one-day sessions in Johannesburg and London exchanged and responded to a calendar month later. Skip the three time-stamped interludes and you're inducted into a harmonious meeting of like minds where spiritually uplifting, groove-based highlights Dune Dance and Cuts And Pieces make good on Alabaster dePlume's whirling sax, Siya Makuzeni's (pictured) sly trombone and Tebogo 'AusTebza' Sedumedi's corkscrewing bass lines. Add in Tarang Cissoko's soothing kora, Danalogue's swerving keyboards, Grandmaster Cap's low-rumbling rapped positivity and the room-rattling skills of tuba don Theon Cross, and *On Our Own Clock* is a serene and spacious refuge where it's nigh impossible to hear the joins.

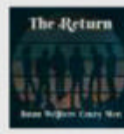
ALSO RELEASED

Bram Weijters' Crazy Men

★★★★★

The Return

SDBAN ULTRA. [CD/DL/LP](#)



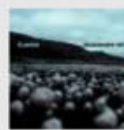
Inspired by a rare 1974 long-player by ill-starred pianist Koen de Bruyne, Antwerp keyboard master Bram Weijters' second deep dive into '70s Belgian jazz rock does more than just reheat the originals. Whether ladling vocal samples over a bastardised pair of Jack van Poll tracks (Objízdka), or slyly referencing *Bitches Brew* (on the woodwind-roaring Pathetic Sounds), these free-spirited fusions sing with swing, groove and sparkle.

Flukten

★★★★★

Velkommen Håp

ODIN. [CD/DL/LP](#)



Little over a year since Flukten's first concert at Oslo's Victoria Nasjonal Jazzscene, comes a wide-spanning debut that makes the most of Hanna Paulsberg's blistering sax over a riotous rhythm section (Bårdur Reinert Poulsen, Hans Hulbækmo) seemingly battling severe ADHD. Flukten's lovelier side surfaces amid Marius Hirth Klovning's mellow guitar ruminations on Jonas Og Hvalen, while sideways nods to Per Johansson and Paul Motian complete a thrillingly uneasy listen.

Kiefer

★★★★★

When There's
Love Around

STONES THROW. [DL/LP](#)



The first band LP from LA keyboardist and Anderson .Paak producer makes good on Kiefer's laidback, beat-detailed jazz and R&B hybrid. While the smooth title track (a Crusaders cover) lets an A-team of West Coast players shine, Crybaby and I Love My Friends – played in a riffy trio – better allow his free-flowing, fluttery keys to work their easy-going yet expressive magic.

Jermiah Cymerman

★★★★★

Citadels & Sanctuaries

5049. [CD/DL](#)



Fourth world sounds abound on this NYC avant-garde scene clarinetist's fifth solo album – a love letter to his favourite composers. From prettified curlicues for late visionary Bill Smith to higher-pitched extended techniques for Alvin Lucier or raw-nerve electric crickets for Horațiu Rădulescu, Cymerman's chimerical sounds chime with emotional force. A standout finale, for free jazz master Evan Parker, makes spectral hay with percussionists Mark Nauseef and Toma Gouband. AC

Millennial moments:
Saint Etienne (from
left) Bob Stanley, Sarah
Cracknell, Pete Wiggs.



Sight specific

Pop doyen's conceptual
10th album located in the UK,
1997-2001. By **John Aizlewood**.

Saint Etienne

★★★★★

I've Been Trying To Tell You

HEAVENLY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

SOMETIMES FOR better, sometimes for worse, it's never been too difficult to slot Saint Etienne into a very English pigeonhole: the occasional indie-dance banger, a detached but warm undertow and an all-encompassing adoration of pop which understands that Who Do You Think You Are? and Only Love Can Break Your Heart are equally wondrous. Thirty years after their debut album, maybe it's time to overturn the old order.

Before it takes hold – and take hold it most surely does – *I've Been Trying To Tell You* is a surprisingly harsh-sounding collage of seemingly unrelated sounds. Indeed, in a plan conceived before lockdown, Bob Stanley, Pete Wiggs and an engagingly quivery Sarah Cracknell recorded in separate studios, convening only via Zoom. The multi-layered concept is a quixotic, politically charged, dream-like attempt to recapture the optimistic national mood between Tony Blair sweeping to power in May 1997 and the 9/11 terror attacks. It's also the soundtrack to an Alasdair McLellan-directed travelogue film, where the only dialogue is taken from '90s Saint Etienne songs.

Their comparison is *Lil' Beethoven*, the Sparks album which both broke new ground and served as a reminder of an extraordinary back

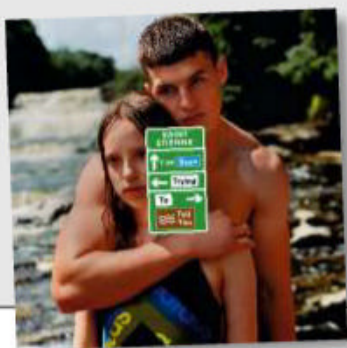
catalogue, but *I've Been Trying To Tell You* is more open-ended. It's packed with recently recorded found sound: birdsong from Low Biggins in Westmorland; lift machinery from a Cardiff hotel; a Felixstowe pebble beach and a squeaky gate next to a stone circle near Wigton.

And there are cunningly deployed samples, seeking to transport the listener back to the late-'90s, in terms of feel and memory, rather than jukebox. Tasmin Archer features on the stentorian, brooding closing near-instrumental Broad River. Sleeping Satellite would be too obvious and too recognisable, so instead it's a loop from the darkly bereft Ripped Inside, taken from *Great Expectations*, the 1992 (exact time period be damned) album which spawned the hit. Natalie Imbruglia's in there too.

The '97-9/11 period remains tantalisingly out of reach, so embracing the precise concept requires an almighty leap of listener faith, and little wonder even Stanley describes it as both "high" and "pretentious". All the same, as an album, *I've Been Trying To Tell You* works wonderfully on many levels. Those harsh first impressions give way to something altogether more beautiful, from the moment Music Again finds Cracknell gliding like peak-period Enya, to the irresistible, super-catchy Penlop.

There's reverie and floating nostalgia to spare in the instrumental Blue Kite; in Pond House, where Cracknell chants "here it comes again" with sinister intent; and in the eerie I Remember It Well.

Nothing, though, quite surpasses Little K, with its earworm hook, Cracknell at her most ethereal, and a delicious, lengthy coda which in itself encapsulates the whole crazy, silly, inspired idea.



Various

★★★★★

Das Wasteland: Berlin Vol. 1 & 2

DAS WASTELAND. [DL/LP](#)

Contemporary rock/dance from the German capital's subterranean hotbed.



A divided city throughout rock's classic age, Berlin's edgy allure has always lured foreign musicians, especially the more bohemian-leaning, after Bowie and Iggy's famous cool-off period there in the '70s. Since the Wall fell, that trend has only intensified, thanks to its low living costs and 24-7 creative atmosphere. From a new label started by Brit rock photographer (and sometime Fabulous guitarist) Martyn Goodacre, *Das Wasteland* documents its underground ex-pat art-rock scene. The star turn is a blissfully meandering unheard mix of Tim Burgess' The Doors Of Then from long-time Prenzlauer Berg resident Anton Newcombe, but there are many intriguing and mainstream-oblivious sounds aboard. From Vagrant Lovers' Patti-esque post-punk/poetry collision and Irish novelist Rob Doyle's sinister spoken-word team-up with Saint Leonard, through to above-par alt-indie from Art Brut, Drab City and the excellent female-fronted Stony Sugarskull, these 17 tracks' colourful diversity only multiply the longing for a cheap-flight weekender trawling Berlin's netherworld dives.

Andrew Perry



Maxine Funke

★★★★★

Seance

A COLOURFUL STORM. [DL/LP](#)

New Zealand singer-song-writer makes the familiar profound and uneasy.



Songs sung in houses at night have a special other-worldly quality. First, there is the whispered delivery, so as not to wake the neighbours. Second, there is the quality of the night itself, how it allows stranger thoughts to come, images suffused with dream-logic and untrammelled by the day's obligations. This is Maxine Funke's world, just voice, acoustic guitar and occasional synth drone and tape whirr giving flight to songs born in moonlight, part riddle, part whispered confessional, with occasional unsettling quotes from the ghost stories of Charlotte Riddell and MR James. Parallels might be drawn with the evensongs of Sibylle Baier and Wendy Eisenberg or the spectral folk songs of Funke's former partner Alastair Galbraith, but there exists a magic here all of Funke's own, a style of songwriting that inhabits a

unique space between a sweet serenade and ancient sorcery.
Andrew Male



Various

★★★★★

Cold Wave #2

SOUL JAZZ. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Brooding dark synth exponents helping fire a timely revival.



Despite being a movement characterised by a certain impassivity, a growing band of contemporary cold wave artists are causing excitement. As the second in this enlightening series attests, the likes of Parisian producer Krikor Kouchian and Amsterdam's Job Sifre combine lo-fi electronics, nonchalant vocals and a strong DIY attitude – just as their heroes Martin Hannett and Asylum Party did four decades ago. Kouchian's contribution, Deserver Dub, fires ray guns and abrasive echo across a twisted rhythm for max carnage. At Least We Try sees temperatures plummet on a record that lurches like a train coupling. Elsewhere, the stark, martial two-step underpinning Stay Away From The Light by Hamburg's L.F.T. is a short leap from the primitive synth drums and thrashing pace that propel Sleaford Mods. Far from a nostalgia trip, this new breed of cold wave artists exhibit a detachment and energy that fit these times perfectly.

Stephen Worthly



Xana Romeo

★★★★★

The Roots Of X

XANA ROMEO MUSIC. [DL](#)

Anticipated second album from rising roots daughter.



In the five years since debut album *Wake Up* first surfaced, Max Romeo's daughter Xana has honed her craft, appearing on stages around the world and experimenting with different styles at the family's home studio. Long-awaited second set *The Roots Of X* shows growing maturity with a stronger command of expressive vibrato on sung numbers and seamless flow on rapped interludes, the lyrics underpinned by Rastafari spirituality, as heard on opener Holy and repatriation song Africa Is Calling. Very much a family affair, most of the dub-heavy rhythms were built by brother Azizki with Jallanzo Johnson of Dubtonic Kru, and father Max guests on Youths First, while uncle Lindy produced Spiritual Guide, which has a fine melodica lead by Addis Pablo. There are also adaptations of Judy Mowatt's Slave Queen and Marlena Shaw's Woman Of The Ghetto.

David Katz



Ed Scissor + Lamplighter

★★★★★

Joysville

HIGH FOCUS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Dead of night poetics and crystalline synths dominate hip-hop pair's third album.

Five years after the dark introspection of *Tell Them It's Winter* confirmed Ed Scissor + Lamplighter as UK hip-hop outliers, *Joysville* corroborates that status. Evolved freely from the Glasgow producer's brooding and spare electronic vigils, Scissor's dark mutterings and deadpan crepuscular storytelling connive with synths that pitter-patter like icy rain. From the Kraftwerkian melody lurking in the title track's pinched bass to the joyous synthetic horns railing against the echoed piano of *Been A Minute*, it's far from one-note, with Scissor's battle rap pedigree cutting through the sci-fi-edged *Plenty*, *Time* – poppy by their austere standards. Party-poopers they may be, but the folkloric time distortions of closer *Valentines* suggest redemption is finally within reach, after a bumpy ride in parts bleak, heart-breaking and beautiful.

Andy Cowan



Elder Jack Ward

★★★★★

Already Made

BIBLE & TIRE RECORDING CO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

At 83, this gospel veteran puts another disc on God's jukebox.



From Itta Bena, Mississippi, Elder Jack Ward had a local hit in 1964 with The Christian Harmonizers called *Don't Need No Doctor*, its sanctified message delivered

with a secular blues feel. Ward also recorded with The Gospel Four and stood in for OV Wright in The Sunset Travelers, but by the late '70s had fallen under the radar. *Already Made* is the kind of record that could change that. Anchored with precision by the Sacred Soul house band, a modern day Swampers, it's awash with church-like organ and embellished with sweet call-and-response by Ward's daughters. His star power is evident throughout, his voice on ballads such as *I Feel Better Since I Prayed* soothes like a warm embrace and on testifiers, such as *The Way Is Already Made*, truly shakes the foundations.

Lois Wilson



Jam & Lewis

★★★★★

Volume 1

FLYTE TYME/BMG. [CD/DL](#)

Classic-sounding debut from the legendary songwriting/production duo.

Recorded piecemeal over three years at Flyte Tyme, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis's studio in Agoura Hills, Los Angeles, *Volume 1* is a star-studded affair featuring Mariah Carey, Tony Braxton, Babyface, Usher and others. The pair, who perhaps more than any other production/songwriting team masterminded the sound of modern R&B, here set out to create what they call "newsalgia", something new that also takes you back to a golden age. They released their fabled 808 to help – it usually resides in a Plexiglas case in the studio – and achieved what they wanted: Mariah Carey scaling dramatic peaks on *Somewhat Loved* (There You Go Breakin' My Heart); Babyface recrowned the king of quiet storm on *He Don't Know Nothin' Bout It*, and Usher, the love doctor, all breathy and hot on *Do It Yourself*.

Lois Wilson

Shannon And The Clams

★★★★

Year Of The Spider

EASY EYE SOUND. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Follow-up to 2018's *Onion*, again recorded in Nashville, Dan Auerbach producing.



Roughly half the songs on this sixth album by Oakland garage punk quartet

Shannon And The Clams are helmed by guitarist Cody Blanchard, the other half by bassist Shannon Shaw. Blanchard's, in the main, conjure strange, eerie atmospheres filled with ghostly spirits like those inhabiting the recordings of Del Shannon and Joe Meek; see *Flowers Will Return* and *In The Hills*, *In The Pines*. "I keep on running back to you," he laments over the latter's woozy fairground organ and spare pop. Shaw's power, meanwhile, lies in her soulful vocal delivery. *Do I Wanna Stay* is defined by her mesmerising rasp – touchstones are Etta James, Ronnie Spector and Amy Winehouse. The album's highpoints, though, happen when both voices come together, as on the yearning girl group ballad, *I Need You Bad*.

Lois Wilson



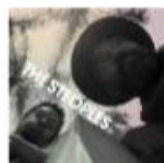
The Steoples

★★★★★

Wide Through The Eyes Of No One

STONES THROW. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Downbeat, curative and often brilliant leftfield soul from transatlantic duo.



Yeofi Andoh's voice is a wonderful thing, evoking Marvin Gaye at his most

wracked, Scott Walker at his noblest, Berlin-era David Bowie at his most tremulous and world weary. On The Steoples' second album, Andoh's multitracked vocals hang suspended, gathering weight and resonance, as creative partner Gifted & Blessed (AKA Los Angeleno producer Frankie Reyes) assembles tracks of baroque chamber soul from treated horns, harp glissandos and gauzy synthesizers. These are introspective songs for the wee hours, Andoh investing the dreamy, uneasy soundtracks with all his blues and anxiety, sketching haunting Edward Hopper vignettes on the sorrowful *Lonely Behaviour* and railing softly at a "whole damn world" in *Leaning On Me*. On the meditative *The Good News*, meanwhile, Andoh confesses that "in the music I can lose it", and this engulfing fog of an album invites listeners to follow his lead.

Stevie Chick

BLUES

BY TONY RUSSELL



Tia Carroll

★★★★★

You Gotta Have It

LITTLE VILLAGE. [CD/DL](#)

First-class soul and blues album by a skilled and strident singer.

ALL OF THE above, yes, but what grabs the listener's attention by the scruff of its neck is the quality and variety of Tia Carroll's material. The serious Black Lives Matter message of *Ain't Nobody Worryin'*, the pensive blues *Even When I'm Not Alone*, two warnings to presumptuous men, *Our Last Time* and *Don't Put Your Hands On Me* – the album begins with this quadruple-whammy, and there's much more to come. Producers Kid Andersen, who plays most of the guitar, and Jim Pugh (keyboards) give the proceedings a bright, brassy sheen, with here and there an affectionate flashback to R&B prehistory like the chuntering guitar rhythms of *Move On* or the wailing chorus of horns on *Never Let Me Go*. A hugely satisfying record.



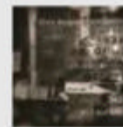
ALSO RELEASED

Chris Bergson

★★★★★

All I Got Left

2 SHIRTS. [CD/DL](#)



In this untypical solo setting Chris Bergson shows off elegant slide guitar chops (*Laid Up With*

My Bad Leg In Lenox; *Cheap Guitar*), plays a threnody for a lost friend (*Silver Surfer*) and offers a calm reading of Dylan's *Blind Willie McTell*. But what lingers are lines from lockdown: "I want to believe the cavalry's coming – but what if this is as good as it gets?"

New Moon Jelly Roll Freedom Rockers

★★★★★

Volume 2

STONY PLAIN. [CD/DL](#)



Like *Volume 1* (reviewed in MOJO 327) this is drawn from a 2007 session involving Charlie

Musselwhite, Jim, Luther and Cody Dickinson, Alvin Youngblood Hart and Jimbo Mathus. Jim Dickinson nods to Mingus in *Oh Lord*, *Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb On Me*, while Hart swings from Doug Sahm's *She's About A*

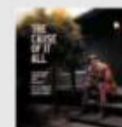
Mover to a Henry Townsend-like *Millionaire Blues*. Four stars for both ambience and achievement.

Rev. Shawn Amos

★★★★

The Cause Of It All

PUT TOGETHER MUSIC. [CD/DL](#)



The latest episode in the curious career of the executive-turned-blues singer finds Rev. Shawn

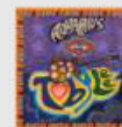
Amos plus harmonica and his guitarist friend Doctor Roberts, stripping down and rebuilding a set of songs by Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and the like, creating a sound so downhome-greasy you want to put a bib on while listening to it.

Toby Lee

★★★★

Aquarius

LEE. [CD/DL/LP](#)



An Oxfordshire teenager who tried to introduce his schoolmates to Robert Johnson,

Toby Lee, as well as being a blues fan, is on the way to becoming a formidable blues guitarist capable of ranging from the old-time swing of *Key To The Highway* to the heavy lifting of *Platform 15* and an ingeniously light and airy *Kansas City*. *TR*



Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, set to release the 808.

Anna Leone:
direct candour.

Anna Leone



I've Felt All These Things

ALL POINTS/HALF-AWAKE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Stockholm native's exquisite, emotional debut.



A PLAINTIVE

"I've waited, I've waited, I've waited for so long" kicks off a record mired in yearning and self-doubt, reflected in songs of intense fragility.

Leone's acoustic folk blueprint is embellished, but carefully: Eno's ambient piano and Kate Bush's ethereal touch are stated touchstones, but you won't necessarily hear them. Instead, Leone's vulnerability and warm, wavery voice recalls Melanie Sakfa, likewise the direct candour of Leone's words. Thin strings coat *Once*, in which she confesses "I forgot what I used to like about me"; faint hymnal voices backdrop *Wondering's* lament "I know you're wondering how I feel when I don't speak my truth." *Do You Ever* is the one time the music swells up, like tears about to be shed, but it's the opposite, as Leone finds relief in a repeated "I know you'll take back your life", a message as much to herself as to the focus of her attention.

Martin Aston

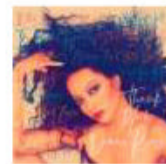
Diana Ross



Thank You

DECCA/UNIVERSAL. [CD/DL/LP/MC](#)

Ex-Motown star's first album since 2006.



The last surviving member of the iconic girl group The Supremes, Ross is a bona-

fide living legend and one of the most decorated singers in pop. But rather than rest on her laurels, the 77-year-old Detroit native has been busy in the studio recording *Thank You* with a bevy of A-list producers that includes Jack Antonoff (Taylor Swift), Troy Miller (Amy Winehouse) and Freddy Wexler (Justin Bieber). The album begins brightly with the peppy, retro-flavoured title song followed by the euphoric disco groove *If The World Just Danced*, but swiftly descends into unremitting mediocrity. Most of the remaining songs are anodyne ballads with banal lyrics and some, like *Count On Me* and *A Time To Call*, have more schmalz than Barry Manilow. On the plus side, Ross is in good voice, but as comeback albums go, this is an underwhelming affair.

Charles Waring

Damon And Naomi With Kurihara



A Sky Record

20 20 20. [CD/DL](#)

Two-thirds of Galaxie 500 go into the blue again with Ghost guitarist.



For British listeners, it might be faintly amusing that Damon

Krukowski and Naomi Yang, models of East Coast indie elegance, should be influenced by the Horlicks-and-Rich-Tea comforts of the Shipping Forecast. *A Sky Record* is, however, all about finding escape hatches and portals wherever you can in a tightly restricted world, and the gentle tides of *Sailing By* does Viking and Cromarty proud. Recorded with the duo's long-time collaborator Michio Kurihara of Japanese band Ghost, there is something quietly moving about the vintage sway of *The Aftertime*, wistfully thinking of "life unfolding", or *Season Without Time's* smudgy watercolour imagery and splashy cymbals evoking loss and dissipation. These songs aren't quite the blast of fresh air needed after months of dreaming about new horizons, but as you'd expect from Damon And Naomi, they're a beautifully curated analogue.

Victoria Segal

Indigo De Souza



Any Shape You Take

SADDLE CREEK. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Songs about life and death by North Carolina firebrand.

Offering dispatches from that dangerously intense passage of your twenties when simply everything seems existential, Indigo De Souza's second album see-saws between manic joy and depressive darkness but never loses its sense of wit, grace or noise-dipped tunefulness. With a croon that cracks like Angel Olsen's, and magical harmonies recalling *Girlpool*, De Souza's clutch of often death-obsessed songs peaks with closer *Kill Me*, where she begs her lover to kill her because, "I wasn't having much fun" – a quiet/loud statement of intensity both blackly comic and subtly moving. In an era awash with tuneful indie-rock, De Souza's tendency towards artful extremism – *Bad Dream's* overload of seasick harmonies and *Pumpkins-like* pomp-grunge, *Real Pain's*



mid-song breakdown into a cacophony of screams and howls – lends an inspired edge to her addictive pop songs.

Stevie Chick



Brinsley Schwarz



Tangled

FRETSTORE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

The 74-year-old's second solo album.



Best known for the pub rock pioneers who took his name and for stints in *The Rumour* alongside Graham Parker, whose *Love Gets You Twisted* is given a run-out here, Brinsley Schwarz has spent much of his recent past as a luthier, while embarking on a belated solo career. Following 2016's *Unexpected*, *Tangled* is a gentle, sweet-natured strum where even the guitar solo on *You Drive Me To Drink* is unassuming. There's real loveliness, though. Schwarz's yearning voice evokes a lifetime of rue, and while *Game On* is surprisingly lustful for a man enjoying his eighth decade, the fragile *Crazy World* is the catchiest of a clutch of earworms. *Storm In The Hills* finds him troubled by mobile phones and is the closest he gets to the chugging pub rock of Brinsley Schwarz the band, but this is late-life renaissance at its most assured.

John Aizlewood

Grouper



Shade

KRANKY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Twelfth LP from the Pacific Northwest artist, assembled over the past 15 years.



The first sound you hear on the opening track of Liz Harris's new album resem-

bles the static hiss of a vinyl run-out groove. Then again, it could also be floodwater crashing against rock. Therein lies the Grouper sweet spot, a midpoint between spectral analogue noise and the intense voice of nature. Described by Harris as "an album about respite, and the coast, poetically and literally", *Shade* begins within a deep well of distortion, the song inside like a decayed photograph of the past. Mostly, however, these are simpler affairs, just plaintive echoing voice and minimalist instrumentation, the occasional hoot of an owl, the night-time thoughts of a solitary figure in retreat. Assembled from on-location recordings in Mount Tamalpais, Portland and Astoria, this album feels personal, contemplative, yet thanks to Harris's blurred vocals, the meaning is never fully in focus, like notes sent back from the edge of a waking dream.

Andrew Male

The Specials



Protest Songs 1924-2012

ISLAND. [CD/DL/LP](#)

How do you follow your first Number 1 album and mark 40 years since Ghost Town?

Of course, every Specials' song feels like a protest song, but fuelled by the death of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police, Terry Hall, Lynval Golding and Horace Panter have scoured the globe for a dozen finger-pointing tunes that retain relevance. Results range from the radio-friendly but obvious (*Get Up, Stand Up*) to the obscure but with not a word out of place: *The Dixie Jubilee Singers' Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Us Around* and *Big Bill Broonzy's Black, Brown And White*. Hall's delivery of the darkest lines sparkles on *Frank Zappa and Leonard Cohen lyrics*, while *Chip Taylor's Fuck All The Perfect People* could have been written for him. And if you ever moan that the current band doesn't sound like Jerry Dammers' group, try their take on *Talking Heads' Listening Wind*. Still fighting the good fight.

David Hutcheon



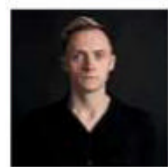
Hamish Hawk

★★★★★

Heavy Elevator

ASSAI RECORDINGS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Edinburgh singer's excellent third album.



Hamish Hawk's authoritative baritone suggests Scott Walker with a Scots brogue.

This is bold stuff, with lyrics that take in Paul the Apostle, the Inner Hebrides and creating something that'll "sound like Common People sung by Christopher Wren". On New Rhododendrons, Hawk rhymes "Caravaggio" with "mythological Himalayan hollows". The words, compositional strength and compelling voice add up to a something like a British Rufus Wainwright. This is Hawk's third album, but the first under just that binomial. He's previously collaborated with King Creosote's Kenny Anderson, but this is an unanticipated leap forward. The Mauritian Badminton Doubles Champion, 1973 is the track where Wren sings Pulp. The title might've come from pre-implosion Morrissey, and many of these songs could hold their own on a Smiths album.

Roy Wilkinson

The Shadracks

★★★★★

From Human Like Forms

DAMAGED GOODS. [DL/LP](#)

Delicious dynastic evolution from Billy Childish's offspring.



With his second dad-helmed long-player, 21-year-old Huddie Hamper here

emerges as more than just a chip off the old block. While Billy Childish's frills-free production roots the Shadracks trio gloriously in his Medway terrain of punk-adrenalised mid-'60s beat-pop, there's more going on besides. Technically, Huddie is the more gifted musician, crooning prettily on Barefoot On The Pavement and Did You Like It Then, and with enough chops to progress beyond maximum R&B guitar orthodoxy. The opening riffs to The Who's I Can't Explain and Nobody's Scared by Subway Sect merely act as a launchpad for Wet Cake and You Are Adored's own rocketing ascent of angst, while, on No Time and Pray, quiet-loud dynamics blast forth, nodding to unsanctioned turn-of-the-'90s heroes Pixies and Nirvana. With stickswoman Elisa Abednego beating an increasingly propulsive tattoo in tandem with Horrors-moonlighting bass recruit Rhys Webb, The Shadracks are shaping up as millennial big-hitters.

Andrew Perry



Space Afrika

★★★★★

Honest Labour

DAIS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Haunting early hours transmissions from contemplative Mancunians.

Manchester duo Joshuas Inyang and Reid create dreamlike downtempo that meshes haunting sound design, doleful ambient, skeletal dub techno and even forays into shoegaze. Accompanied, in part, by a clutch of rappers, poets and soulful vocalists, tracks rarely outstay their welcome – but each one vies for equal attention, each has something important to say. On the ice-coated LV, skirls of droning guitar battle with abrasive cello. B&E starts with a scowl, strapping the staccato rhymes of Salford MC/dancer Blackhaine to a sedate Funky Drummer break, before weeping, sweeping strings lead it somewhere very different. "...My heart, an arrow headed for it, predestined to puncture," intones Mancunian poet KinseyLloyd on the

somnambulant, head-nodding U. It is a fitting summary of an intermittently discomfiting record, tinged with sadness and beautifully composed.

Stephen Worthly

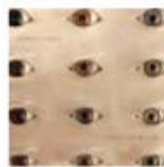
Thalia Zedek Band

★★★★★

Perfect Vision

THRILL JOCKEY. [CD/D/LP](#)

Former Live Skull/Come frontwoman sings blues songs for the apocalypse.



Thalia Zedek's songs are like storms brewing off on the horizon, her flavour of blues measured, subtle, but heavy with portent. Her latest album reflects an America coming apart, the former Come singer penning these tunes in an era when simmering social divisions boiled over into hatred and violence. She sings songs of dread and disappointment, wincing "Our fathers are insane/Watch them feeding reason to the flames" on Cranes, mulling over insoluble conflicts on Overblown, and sketching out the endgame on the apocalyptic Revelation Time. Backed by a group who commit the loose attack of '70s Stones to altogether bleaker material, the result is electric and tense, from the paranoid waltz of Smoked, to the scything viola that scours the Crazy Horse mourn of Binoculars, to Zedek's articulate, quietly

searing guitar solos on the closing Tolls. Bleak but often gripping stuff.

Stevie Chick

The Stranglers

★★★★★

Dark Matters

COURSEGOOD. [CD/DL/LP/MC](#)

Erstwhile meninblack's first LP in nine years, the last with Dave Greenfield, 18th in all.



Today's StranglersWorld is much changed since 2012's *Giants*: Jet Black has finally retired, while the death last year of Dave Greenfield took away another key element. Yet the keyboardist had already contributed parts to eight of these 11 songs, and his band-mates found strength in adversity to complete what's easily the best Stranglers album since their heyday. Critically, *Dark Matters* evokes, rather than merely simulates, the band's hallmark quirk and strangeness, lending integrity to the ongoing endeavour. While Water builds lustily around JJ Burnel's signature bass clang and Greenfield's arpeggios, and The Last Men On The Moon reopens their questing sci-fi almanac, a fresh catalytic energy abounds, extraordinarily so on the prog-operatic White Stallion. Burnel's reflective chansonier vocals, meanwhile, bring a 69-year-old's wisdom to real life concerns, very poignantly on the Arthur Lee lilt of And If You

Should See Dave. They've done an old Strangler proud.

Keith Cameron

Tim Finn & Phil Manzanera

★★★★★

Caught By The Heart

EXPRESSION. [CD/DL](#)

Genre-hopping debut collaboration.



Tim Finn and Phil Manzanera first met in Australia in 1975 when Split Enz

opened for Roxy Music – a time when music was often road-tested live before being committed to tape. Forty-five years later, separated by distance, an album that almost sounds live has been created by email tag. It is at times a joyous set of songs with a Latin feel. Take the opener, Mambo! Salsa! "Music from Cuba, still a life force", sings Finn and he's right: the wonderful, carnivalesque whirl of music is perfect. With its ska beat, The Cry Of The Earth is the obligatory eco-concerned song ("despite all the warning... the oceans are warming") from wealthy baby boomers who caused the problem in the first place – but let's park that, because Caught By The Heart, despite trying to break out into the theme tune of '70s TV talent show New Faces, is a wonderful ballad. A likeable, serotonin-boosting listen.

David Buckley



Manic Street Preachers' rich pop harvest.

Manic Street Preachers

★★★★★

The Ultra Vivid Lament

COLUMBIA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

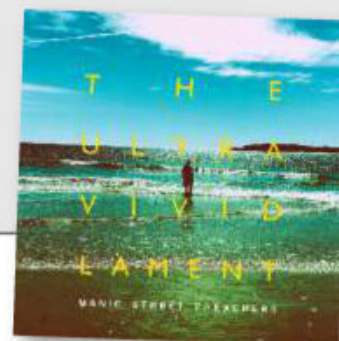
The Welshmen's 14th studio LP tips a hat to Björn and Benny – that is, when Mark Lanegan isn't guesting.

WITH ITS pillow-soft edges, Mr Sheen finish and relentless Top Of The Pops circa 1983 choruses, first impressions of *The Ultra Vivid Lament*

might be that it's MSP's worst-ever album. Yet surrender to its flocculent rock-lite universe – while also turning a blind ear to some over-obvious barbs (at "those boys from Eton", etc) and existential *cris de coeur* (the Lanegan sung Blank Diary Entry) – and within a few plays one wonders if it is, in fact, among their very best. Written chiefly on piano, it's essentially a particularly dark MSP bravely

attempting to go a bit Abba, failing miserably, but in the process creating a skewed but alluring new pop persona. Highlights are too many to list, but the infectious Orwellian and The Secret He Had Missed (a duet inspired by Gwen and Augustus John) truly hit the spot, while Still Snowing In Sapporo is an oven-ready MSP anthem of humungous dimensions. A hit.

Pat Gilbert





Toyah

★★★★

Posh Pop

EDSEL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Her 11th solo album, co-written and co-produced by Simon Darlow.

Toyah and husband Robert Fripp's Sunday Lunch, a huge hit on YouTube and home-filmed in their swanky modern rustic kitchen, were a series of fun covers mainly of hard rock standards such as Enter Sandman, Smells Like Teen Spirit and Paranoid. On *Posh Pop*, Toyah essentially keeps the same sound, more Portland than Pershore, and wants to convince us that now is the time for uplift and action. "I'm a baby boomer/I wanna be a millionaire," explodes Toyah on Zoom Zoom, possibly the least empathetic call to arms ever sung, given that said demographic are doing quite nicely, thank you. The songs are well crafted, with Space Dance and Levitate particularly energised, and guitarist Bobby Willcox (presumably Mr Fripp's hard-rocking alter ego) throws some Red Hot Chili Peppers shapes and grunge power chords. But those expecting something as baffling and quirky as those YouTube videos may be just ever so slightly disappointed by the conformity of it all.

David Buckley

David Grubbs & Ryley Walker

★★★★

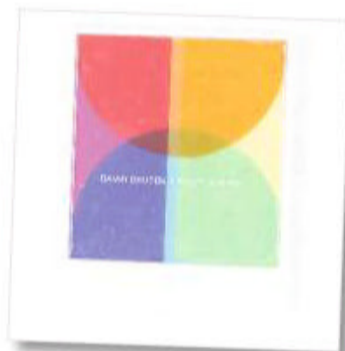
A Tap On The Shoulder

HUSKY PANTS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Welcome second outing for Chicago guitarists' "mutual admiration society".

Whether it's his formative roles in Squirrel Bait, Bastro and Gastr del Sol or his more recent solo recordings and collaborative work with Loren Connors and Taku Unami, David Grubbs is a guitar legend on the Chicago scene, and Ryley Walker, as he would no doubt admit, is the goofy fan. However, on this, the duo's second release (following a download-only recording for Cafe Oto's Takuroku label), he is both collaborator and equal. Moving from slow, dream-like Latin dances of piano and guitar (Accepting Most Plans) and close-miked acoustic plucking (Dorothy Kept) to electric-Miles-style space-wah warble, before ending on the 13-minute churning noise squall of Uglification, *A Tap On The Shoulder* is an instrumental guitar album locked in to something profound, intimate and intense, a sonic city tour that begins in picturesque daylight and ends in a 4am basement on the bad side of town.

Andrew Male



Chvrches

★★★★

Screen Violence

EMI. [CD/DL/LP/MC](#)

Fourth album, titled after the name they almost called themselves.

Perhaps the smartest thing about Glasgow's Chvrches is how they manage to be super-modern and reverently traditional, often within the same song. Fourth time around, they celebrate their decade together by setting Lauren Mayberry's vocals – part Elizabeth Fraser, part Sugarcubes-era Björk – against cascading banks of synthesizers in the manner of a more edgy Empire Of The Sun, and when Robert Smith guests on the strident How Not To Drown it's a perfect retro storm. Yet the opening Asking For A Friend has a very 2021 clatter, while Violent Delights evokes a sugar-free Ellie Goulding. Mayberry's lyrics are cutting-edge contemporary too. Good Girls muses upon misogynistic male ex-heroes, while He Said She Said grapples with everyday sexism ("You need to be fed/ But keep an eye on your waistline"), and such is Mayberry's anger that her accent becomes more distinct as the musical hurricane swirls around her.

John Aizlewood

Various

★★★★★

Intermission

GHOST BOX CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS. [CD/LP](#)

Retro-futurist set from Ghost Box regulars and satellite artists, in physical formats.

A label predicated on music that explores the "misremembered musical history of a parallel world", Jim Jupp's Ghost Box label is hauntological ground zero – a place where yesterday's modernism serves as a portal to fuzzily utopian futures. Previously accessible as a digital download but now available on suitably passé physical formats, *Intermission* comprises 18 brand new, if nostalgically freighted essays, running the gamut of Ghost Box-endorsed styles from interlude soundtrack (The Advisory Circle's '70s library music-aping Airflow, Plone's Raymond Scott-like When Everyone's Asleep) to hypnagogic folk (Sharron Kraus's recorder-emblazoned Tell Me Why,) via motorik electronica (Pye Corner Audio's Modern Reels) and ambient reverie (The Hardy Tree's Woodberry Vale). Everything here is beguilingly, knowingly rendered and – the sinister public information film undertones of Justin Hopper's spoken word Recreation Park notwithstanding – certainly offers a blissfully insouciant *Intermission* from dystopian 21st century reality.

David Sheppard



Ian McNabb

★★★★★

Utopian

FAIRFIELD. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Twenty songs on the 20th album from former Icicle Works leader.



Never one to lose faith in the redemptive power of music, the gleefully

prolific Ian McNabb has been cranking out solo albums for 28 years, mostly as a Merseyside cottage industry based at Nabby Road Studio. There are vestiges of Icicle Works' trademark Byrdsian gallop, most notably on the radio-friendly summer anthem You Bring Good Things, but his way with an irresistible earworm and a literate lyric remain firmly intact. Over two discs/albums, the rich, defiant *Utopian* casts McNabb as a mood-spinner supreme. He's rueful on Boy, where he reflects upon his inevitable posthumous rehabilitation; mischievous when he DJs in a "maximum security nursing home" on Jivin' Miss Daisy ("Ain't you got any Howard Keel?") and beautifully elegiac on Harry Dean Stanton. Is there an artist who's deserved more than cult status for so long than Ian McNabb? It's hard to think of one.

John Aizlewood

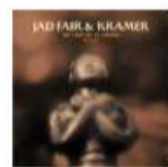
Jad Fair & Kramer

★★★★

The History Of Crying (Revisited)

SHIMMY DISC/JOYFUL NOISE. [DL/LP](#)

Two warhorses from the post-hardcore US fringes reunite.



This avant-rock odd couple have somehow soldiered through to the 2020s. In

2014, Jad Fair reconvened Half Japanese to cut six lively albums in as many years in his sham-bolic, heart-on-sleeve idiom. Considerably more bruised, Kramer wound up his Shimmy Disc record label in 1999 following a lawsuit from ex-Bongwater singer Ann Magnuson, then worked for magician duo Penn & Teller, but two decades on he quietly relaunched the off-the-wall label in Miami. Here, the pair rekindle a partnership initiated on 1988's *Roll Out The Barrel*, whose infantile slant on NYC basement noise is switched for an unexpectedly hi-tech sound palette centred on putt-er drum machines and synths, but also incorporating steel pans (All I Need Is A Kiss) and intermittently zany guitar FX from Butthole Surfers' Paul Leary. Throughout, this is a deeply strange record, on Red Red Sun and I Won't Eat 'Til You Come Back To Me reimagining Broadway songcraft with all the queasy infectiousness of primetime Flaming Lips.

Andrew Perry

Matthew E White

★★★★★

K Bay

DOMINO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

First solo album in six years from Spacebomb polymath makes up for lost time.

"ANYTHING THAT swings will hit you back if you don't move in time," sings Matthew E White on Genuine Hesitation's disco Sultans Of Swing, a warning that offers some clue to the Virginian's restless, moving-target approach. Following *Broken Mirror: A Selfie Reflection*, this spring's collaboration with Lonnie Holley, White's third solo album has every lever pushed down into imaginative overdrive, jamming the idea conveyor belts to admirable – if exhausting – effect. The centrepiece



Matthew E White: locking into imaginative overdrive.



is grand musical theatre commentary Only In America/

When The Curtains Of The Night Are Peeled Back; more digestible are Electric's sliced-and-diced Kokomo or Judy's pumped-up

Elton John glam. It's almost too strenuous in its attempts to top its predecessors, 2012's *Big Inner* and 2015's *Fresh Blood*, but once inside White's all-enveloping world, there's no space to worry too much.

Victoria Segal



Altın Gün

★★★★★

Âlem

BANDCAMP. [DL](#)

Turkish psych six-piece fuse Anatolian instruments with vintage electronica on this Bandcamp-only LP. A heady blend: from opening volley of 808 drums (Yali Yali) to Cips Kola Kilit's New Order-y fluidity and a trance rework of the trad Badi Sabah Olmadan that sounds like Jane Weaver, it works. *JB*



Pete Aves

★★★★★

Sweet Are The Uses

SUPERMOON. [CD/LP](#)

The High Llama's first album in five years sounds like latter-day Kevin Rowland in its richly sung, idiosyncratic diversity; wistful and darkly funny. See Sanity Project's acoustic study of enforced contemplation, or hymns to heroes the Allmans, Merle Haggard and Neil Innes. *JB*



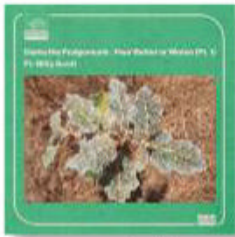
Common

★★★★

A Beautiful Revolution Pt 2

LOMA VISTA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

An improvement on 2020's lightweight *Pt 1*, the Chicago rapper is in galvanising form on the standout Afro-funk of When We Move, a three-way with Black Thought and Seun Kuti, and slow-rolling Brittany Howard duet Saving Grace. *AC*



Damu The Fudgemunk

★★★★★

Conversation Peace

DEF PRESSE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Washington DC-based rapper/producer Damu's orchestral boom-bap magic with KPM's music library – lush yet chilled beats with strings, horns, pianos and vibes – below fluid rhymes of Blu, Raw Poetic, Insight and Nitty Scott. *AC*



Sam Gendel & Sam Wilkes

★★★★★

Music For Saxophone & Bass Guitar More Songs

LEAVING. [DL/LP/MC](#)

LA duo's second set of smudged and intimate future jazz majors on Gendel's sax figures and Wilkes' bass solos, bish-bashed through pedals over Dilla-ish beats. Moving and, when it peaks, transcendental. *AC*



Colleen Green

★★★★★

Cool

HARDLY ART. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Gordon Raphael-assisted second from grunge-schooled Los Angeleno. Louche melodies, staccato guitar and Go-Go's swing and sweetness make a great summer indie pop album. Knowing nods to Iggy and Kraftwerk in Natural Chorus's catchy synth riff and chug. *JB*



King Krule

★★★★

You Heat Me Up, You Cool Me Down

XL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Archy Marshall's live LP for a cancelled tour: songs from his debut and 2017's *The Ooz* give bright flashes of energy amid mumbled, melancholic vignettes from *Man Alive!* A set as peculiarly brilliant and baffling as his records. *JB*



Walt McClements

★★★★★

A Hole In The Fence

AMERICAN DREAMS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

An ambient drone album for accordion? That's the unlikely M.O. here, as Hurrah For The Riff Raff co-founder McClements brings the sepulchral gravitas to the squeezebox that Kali Malone does to the pipe organ. *JM*



Vasconcelos Sentimento

★★★★

Furto

FAR OUT. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Sample-based electronic jazz from Brazil's one-man jukebox Guilherme Esteves, whose Jose Mauro-inspired collage scans like an edit of Gilles Peterson's record collection. Novo Velho's flute and clattering percussion is Moon River on teacups. *JB*



Soccer96

★★★★★

Dopamine

MOSHI MOSHI. [CD/DL/LP](#)

London jazz scenesters Danalogue and Betamax veer from bone-rattling dystopia to post-punk disquiet and Sun Ra lightness as analogue sounds and polyrhythms entwine, addressing our use of AI. Nuha Ruby Ra and Salami Rose Joe Louis deepen the dialogue. *AC*



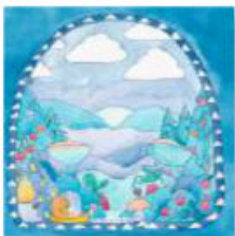
Spencer.

★★★★★

Are U Down?

4AD. [CD/DL/LP](#)

A lovelorn narrative weaves through NYC newcomer's first. Indie heartbreakers Lonely As I Ever Was, RocStar and Drop hybridise soul hooks, hip-hop flows and shimmering guitars, whose chilled, down-home charms remind of Duckworth and early dc Basehead. *AC*



Tobacco City

★★★★★

Tobacco City USA

SCISSOR TAIL. [DL/LP](#)

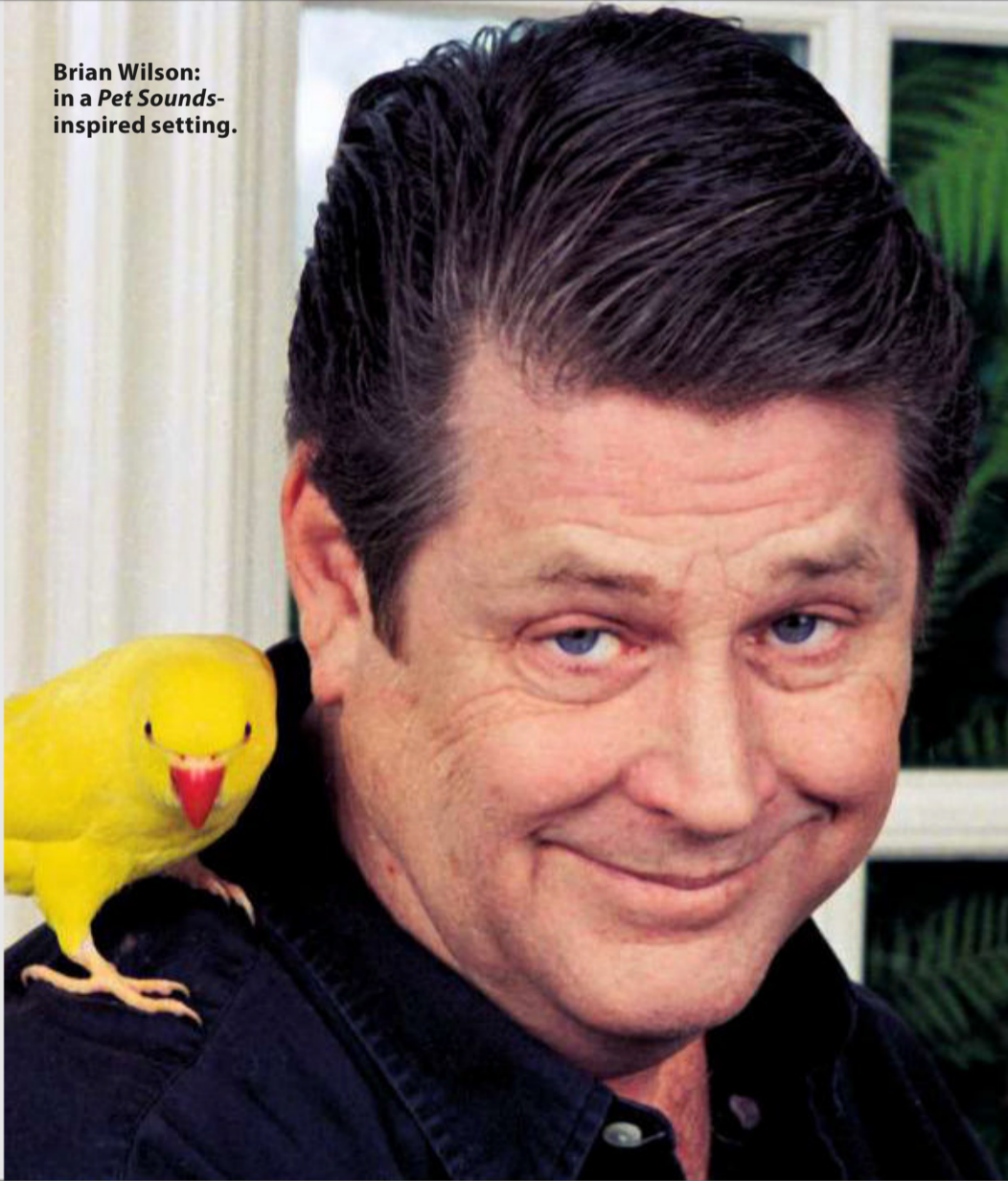
Extremely mellow cosmic country from Chicago newcomers. Reference points: mildly tripped-out Gram'n'Emmylou; Beachwood Sparks; Mazzy Star on the outstanding Half In The Bag. Good vibes, and good songs, too. *JM*

EXTENDED PLAY

Brian Wilson demos

In the unlikely event you've already exhausted the riches to be found in The Beach Boys' *Feel Flows* box set, Brian Wilson just dumped a whole heap of unreleased tracks onto his upgraded website, [brianwilson.com](#). Unsteady 1976 piano demos for *The Beach Boys Love You* contain as much pathos as genius, but there's also plenty of evidence that Wilson continued to make good music well into his solo career. Navigate tacky synths and occasionally strained vocals on a clutch of '80s finds, then head for the 1995 sessions where producer Andy Paley placed Wilson's craftsmanship into much more sympathetic, *Pet Sounds*-inspired settings. Many of these songs – notably the gorgeous Gettin' In Over My Head – eventually surfaced in different versions, but the demos are definitive. "The only time I ever really jumped out of my chair in 30 years was when I heard Andy [Paley]'s stuff," Wilson told me in '95. It remains one of myriad Wilson-related disappointments that their creative partnership was never properly fulfilled. *JM*

Brian Wilson: in a *Pet Sounds*-inspired setting.



Sing the body electric

Seventeen CDs and three Blu-Rays documenting the demonic prog visionaries' decade of art-rock insanity. **Andrew Male** is mad for it.

Van Der Graaf Generator



The Charisma Years

UMC. CD

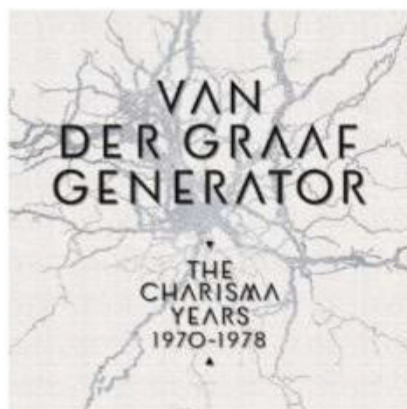
IT WAS during the summer of 1971 that Van Der Graaf Generator collectively began to lose their minds. Following the release of third studio LP, *H To He, Who Am The Only One*, the group headlined a “six bob tickets” UK tour with Charisma labelmates Genesis and Lindisfarne, a blatantly commercial plan by label boss Tony Stratton Smith to flog more of his artists’ records. However, this quartet, who’d formed at Manchester University towards the end of 1967, had different goals. “We wanted more chaos,” frontman Peter Hammill said later. “We were not designed for success.”

Their set-up was undeniably nonconformist, with Hammill’s insinuating choirboy vocals and ominous Manichean lyrics fortified by the sinister energy force of Hugh Banton’s Hammond E112 church organ, David Jackson’s twin electric saxes and Guy Evans’ unassailable drumming. However, further battered by a pummelling three-week tour of Germany, too much alcohol, barely any food, cone-shaped spliffs, and the occasional foray into LSD, disorder became their watchword, terror their fifth member. It all poured into their new album, *Pawn Hearts*.

Listening to *Pawn Hearts* here, as an original recording, an extra CD of outtakes, a new expansive stereo mix, and a mind-altering high resolution 5.1 Surround Sound Mix from the 16-track masters, that madness is still palpable. From the hysterical despair of album opener Lemmings (“We are drawing near to the cliffs... There is no escape except to go forward”) and the good cop/bad cop

interrogation of Man-Erg, to absurdist side-long nightmare A Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers and contemporaneous live favourite Squid/Octopus (“Too scared of dying again to live”), you are thrown back to the UK of the Angry Brigade, postal strikes and Long Kesh prison while simultaneously embracing the lunatic thinking of Boris Johnson’s Freedom Day and the contemporary avant-rock surrealism of post-VDGG contemporaries Squid, Black Midi and Black Country, New Road. This is a sound both fearful and addictive. There is something compellingly strange and beautiful about VDGG’s musical sorcery that drives you on, like some cursed Lovecraftian grimoire that must be devoured. If ever a band was suited to the 20-CD box set, it is this one.

The group’s alchemical power begins in the uniqueness of their relative elements. Both Hammill and Jackson had been choristers, with Jackson also a brilliant flautist and saxophonist. Evans had learned his chops from his bandleader father Joe; Banton had been taught church organ by Wakefield Cathedral organist Percy Saunders. This mix of the secular and the sacred comes through in their first Charisma LP, 1970’s



“In Italy, they were met with capacity audiences, riots and adoration.”

The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other, which gleefully shifts from Refugees’ parallel universe psych-pop to White Hammer’s ecclesiastic R&B invocation of 15th century demonology. That dual personality becomes amplified on follow-up *H To He...*, thanks to Banton and Jackson’s need to make their instruments sound louder, more unhinged, in support of the creeping, white-knuckled world-view of their frontman. As on the unearthly, beautiful skronk epic *Pioneers Over C* (a tale of time-warp astronauts returning to Earth as ghosts) this is music of tension and release, repression and liberation.

When VDGG brought their baroque operatics to Italy in winter ’72 they were adopted as political radicals and met with capacity audiences, riots and adoration. Something of that itchy insurrection is captured on Disc 19, with previously unreleased footage of them playing Paris Bataclan and their four-song Pop Shop set for Belgian TV. You see a group on a cliff-edge, uncertain whether they are approaching breakthrough or breakdown. For the

sake of band and audience alike, a two-year break was imposed. Evans, Banton and Jackson played on Hammill’s run of solo LPs, but it wasn’t until January 1975, rehearsing in an old Herefordshire rectory, that a new incarnation of VDGG took shape.

From the opening lyrics of *The Undercover Man* (“As if there were a choice but to carry on/Miming the song/And hope that it all works out right”) there is a knowing wisdom to this reformed group, its disparate flying engine parts now working as a chrome-plated machine of unknown purpose. Lyrically, *Godbluff* and its spine-chilling twin, *Still Life*, feel closer to Hammill solo LPs with love songs for the apocalypse (*Still Life*, *La Rossa*, *Childlike Faith In Childhood’s End*). Live, they were vicious, prowling, relentless.

The febrile proto-punk *Live, Rimini 1975* recording and 1976 John Peel session might already be known to fans, but this box set also contains a Paris concert from December ’76 (across two CDs) drenched in the “rudely stamp’d” Richard III energy of Hammill’s stage presence; one picked up by John Lydon and other mid-’70s teenagers hungry for a taste of scorched-earth rock nihilism.

Now producing and managing themselves, they were working with a new confidence. Yet, necessary tension started to get lost along the way. Compare the version of *Masks* on 1976’s *World Record* with that recorded for John Peel in 1976 (both available here) and it’s hard not to side with the more savage and ragged session.

Core members began to fall away. First the recently married Hugh Banton announced he wanted to leave, then David Jackson. Now playing electric guitar, Hammill became the group’s sonic focus. With founder member Nic Potter back on bass and Graham Smith on viola, a stripped back “primitive” version of the band took to the road. By the time they went into the studio, cellist Charles Dickie had been added and the final studio LP here, *The Quiet Zone/The Pleasure Dome*, is closer to a perfectly decent Hammill solo LP lacking some necessary sting. Controversially, the group’s swan-song was 1978’s wantonly ugly live-at-the-Marquee double LP *Vital*. Hated at the time by hardcore fans, it now sounds incredible; its unrelenting, post-punk fury terrifyingly close to the dark ‘pawn’ heart of the original line-up. “It was the sound of a band playing for our very survival,” Hammill says in the liner notes. “We [had no money] and we were literally falling apart.”

VDGG reformed in 2005, with their 13th and possibly last album released in 2016, and the group will headline the Beautiful Days festival on August 22, 2021. The Man-Erg is still strong but doubtless everyone involved would agree that the 10-year arc documented here remains unique, elemental, and unassailable.



BACK STORY: HAVING VISIONS

● Charisma’s Tony Stratton Smith once said Van Der Graaf Generator summoned a demon during the *Pawn Hearts* writing recording sessions at his 16th century home, Luxford House. Yes, it’s a joke, but listening to Stephen Tayler’s new stereo and 5:1 mixes you do feel you’re not alone, largely because he has picked out extra vocals, flute parts and sax lines that haven’t been heard since the original recording.

We can wave to each other:
Van Der Graaf Generator
make communication,
1975 (from left) Guy Evans,
David Jackson, Peter
Hammill, Hugh Banton.



Let us spray: Metallica enjoying their walk on the black side.



Nothing else remains

Thirty years on, Hetfield, Ulrich (and Hammett!) clear out the vaults from their 'Black Album' period. By **Andrew Perry**.

Metallica

★★★★★

Metallica (Remastered Deluxe Box Set)

BLACKENED RECORDINGS/WARNERS. C/CD+DVD/LP

IN THE highfalutin critical conversation, Nirvana's *Nevermind* 'won' 1991-92 in mainstream rock, because it initiated the breakthrough of alternative culture. In commercial terms, however, it was actually pipped to the post by another dark horse – Metallica's self-titled fifth long-player, which concurrently saw the titans of thrash metal streamline their sound for FM-radio airplay amid uproar from their purist cult fanbase.

With *Metallica* pegged just above *Nevermind* as the 16th biggest-selling single-artist album ever, James Hetfield's crew will now pull further ahead with a raft of remasters, including possibly the biggest all-time box set for one album – a whopping 27 discs.

Of course, this peerlessly success-hungry group have never balked at letting it all hang out, for cash. In 2004's *Some Kind Of Monster* movie, they famously exposed their disagreements during 'performance enhancement coaching', and to a similar degree the bonus material here lays bare their inner workings at a transitional juncture, with three full CDs of early-stage demos and 'writing in progress' sessions, before you even get to two more containing alternate mixes and outtakes.

In amongst a couple of hours of press-interview audio (a first in such packages?), Hetfield reveals

to MOJO's David Fricke how he'd had the title for *Metallica*'s flagship tune, Enter Sandman, knocking around for years. "Everyone hated it," he guffaws, "but this time I finally found something to match it up with." That ingredient emerges on 'Kirk's Riff Tapes II', just as an introductory arpeggio from guitarist Kirk Hammett, which then gets turned into a song by Hetfield and drummer Lars Ulrich across various sessions in July-August 1990. Listeners can equally trace through the genesis of the other 11 numbers in forensic detail.

Ulrich, in his Fricke interview, reveals that the album's other game-changer, brooding ballad Nothing Else Matters, unusually arrived as a complete verse-chorus song from Hetfield, and that producer Bob Rock duly encouraged the bullish frontman to mine his more vulnerable side.

Certainly, listening back to the full album in its meticulous clarity today, you're struck by how slow it is, especially as contrasted with parts of the live set recorded at the USSR's Tushino Airfield in September '91, the month after release. This much-bootlegged show from "Moss-cow" finds Metallica discreetly unveiling their new direction, in among the full-throttle '80s-vintage carnage of Master Of Puppets, Battery and Whiplash.

By '92-93, they were slaying stadia from Sacramento to Mannheim at their leisure, busting out eight-minute bass solos (included here) and versions of Budgie's Breadfan alike.

As if this £175 casket of delights was not enough to seal *Metallica*'s ongoing metal supremacy, a separate quadruple tribute album of 53 covers of its 12 tracks lands simultaneously (see page 92), doubtless ensuring the band's ecstasy of gold from this classic record will only intensify.



Emmylou Harris And The Nash Ramblers

★★★★★

Ramble In Music City: The Lost Concert

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Unearthed after 30 years, her first Nashville show with five-man bluegrass band.



A year and a half before *At The Ryman* (1992) – their famed live-in-Nashville double album – Emmylou and her new band played another Music City show, also recorded, but left to gather dust on a shelf. This Tennessee Performing Arts Centre show turns out to be as good if not better than the Grammy-winning *Ryman* one – and with a longer and entirely different setlist. The 23 songs include churchy traditionals (Green Pastures), Outlaw Country (Even Cowgirls Get The Blues; If I Needed You) and pop and folk rock covers (Save The Last Dance For Me; The Boxer) filtered through spirited, road-honed, note-perfect bluegrass. There's not a bad track here – unless you dislike flying-fingered instrumentals or prefer to hear Harris's voice without a male harmony – and a slew of highlights like Sweet Dreams, heartbreaking Boulder To Birmingham and stunning Wayfaring Stranger, her voice both fragile and powerful.

Sylvie Simmons



Supergrass

★★★★★

In It For The Money

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Greed is good: Britpop trio's second album still pays out.



It wasn't obvious from 1995's debut caper *I Should Coco* that Supergrass – Britpop urchins living hand-to-spliff in the moment – were a band built to last. 1997's *In It For The Money* forced a re-evaluation, however, showing a depth and allusiveness only hinted at previously. The ebullience remains in Tonight's "woo-hoo!" or the piano knees-up chorus of Late In The Day but on the psychedelic sunspots – Going Out; Sun Hits The Sky – what's left of their fag-smoking innocence is cashed in for darker rock experience. Along with live versions (including a full-bodied Melanie Davis from 1996), demos and a knockabout snippet of them failing to record Sometimes I Make You Sad, there are also such top-drawer B-sides as We Still Need More (Than Anyone Can Give) and Don't Be Cruel, the sure mark of a band effortlessly working in the creative black.

Victoria Segal

Tintern Abbey

★★★★★

Beeside: The Complete Recordings

GRAPEFRUIT. CD

The full story of the Brit-psycho legends is finally told.



Tintern Abbey's sole release was the November 1967 single Beeside with B-side Vacuum Cleaner. Ethereal and etiolated, it barely sold. Its inclusion on 1980's *Chocolate Soup For Diabetics* compilation meant belated recognition for its genius. Although tracks from acetates surfaced later, the band remained vaporous. Revealing all, this 36-track double CD includes 28 previously unheard tracks. It turns out the band was central to London's psychedelic scene as they were bankrolled by the backer of underground newspaper International Times. Much of this music is amazing: their shelved second single, Snowman, is as stellar as anything on The Pretty Things' *S.F. Sorrow*. Let The Wind Blow is in the same bag as Pink Floyd's *Scream Thy Last Scream*, while My Prayer is as far-out as the Netherlands' Groep 1850. Being so all-encompassing could have undermined the legend; instead, and despite a few brushes with pop, this set is a mind blower.

Kieron Tyler



Boris

★★★★★

Flood

THIRD MAN. LP

Tokyo experimentalists' epic 2000 ambient-prog-sludge masterpiece.



Taking their name from a Melvins track, Boris had proven their heavy mettle with *Absolutego* and *Amplifier Worship*, two albums that see-sawed between brutal feedback and sludgy thrash. Their third album, however, was a different beast, exploring gradations of light and shade hitherto barely hinted at. Across Flood's 70 minutes and four movements, meditative guitars conjure a peaceful ambience and ruminative solos build gently in volume, before a colossal riff surfaces midway through the third chapter, exalts in its own heaviness for five or so minutes, then sinks away again. A grand concept perfectly executed, *Flood*'s beauty lies in the details: the opening guitar lines as they slowly edge out of sync with each other like a Steve Reich tape experiment, or the climactic, sulphurous waves of amplifier drone and shimmering gong like the wake left by a leviathan.

Stevie Chick

Brian May

★★★★

Back To The Light

UMC/EMI. CD/DL/LP

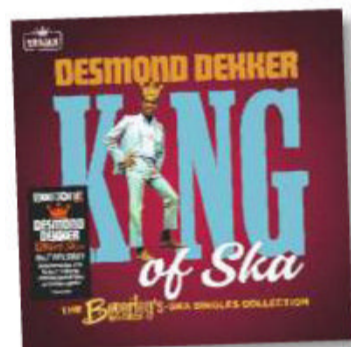
Before badgers and Copernicus: May's solo debut remastered and expanded.



First released in 1992, the year after Freddie Mercury's death, Brian May's solo

debut was a huge personal milestone, the guitarist adapting to a frontman role while the loss of his father and the dissolution of his first marriage were also still fresh in his mind. Long unavailable in any format – and here remastered to epic new heights by Bob Ludwig – it's a set of sharp contrasts. The Queen-like reach of Too Much Love Will Kill You and Nothin' But Blue (the latter was written about Freddie and coaxed out John Deacon on bass) channel a grace and sophistication less apparent in Love Token and UK Number 6 single Driven By You, two rather leaden candidates for the Alan Partridge driving-gloves. Also includes live/instrumental versions disc *Out Of The Light*, wherein Brian's trusty, ever-distinctive Red Special rules.

James McNair



Desmond Dekker

★★★★

King of Ska

TROJAN. LP

His first 10 singles, with foldout poster.

Rejected by Studio One and Treasure Isle, former welder Desmond Dekker launched his illustrious career at Beverley's Records in 1963, hitting instantly with the proverbial Honour Your Mother And Father. This limited edition box set reproduces his first 10 releases for the label, charting Dekker's rise in Jamaica, which saw him crowned King of Ska a good few years before Israelites facilitated his international breakthrough. Although Get Up Adina was popular abroad and It Was Only A Dream a local hit, most other songs are unfamiliar. Sinners, Prepare! is ska gospel, Parents and Labour For Learning wield proverbs to warn of crime's allure, and Dracula a tale of romance gone wrong; equally appealing non-Dekker B-sides include Don Dummond's thrilling R&B instrumental Spitfire, Theophilus Beckford's foreboding Take Your Time, and the lazy ska of Sonny Burke's Sleepwalk.

David Katz

Ray Charles

★★★★

True Genius

TANGERINE. CD/DL

Brother Ray's post-Atlantic journey summed up in 99 tracks on six CDs.



Already a major star, Ray Charles quit Atlantic Records in 1960, signed with ABC-Paramount, gained

control of future mastertapes and in 1962 took on his own label, Tangerine, which would release music by other acts as well as, later, his own. Shifting his focus to LPs, concepts could be clunky: *Genius Hits The Road* (place names); *Dedicated To You* (women's names); *Sweet And Sour Tears* (weepies); *Have A Smile With Me* (say cheese). Between times, already signalled by 1959's pop-country ballad Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying and a romping R&B take on Hank Snow's I'm Movin' On, his final B-side for Atlantic, ABC's two horizon-widening volumes of *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* in 1962-63 hurtled him into the mainstream white market. Here, across six CDs, with nine previously unreleased live tracks from Stockholm 1972, we also revisit his many Beatles covers (Long And Winding Road; Yesterday; Eleanor Rigby; Something; Let It Be; Imagine), plus Randy Newman (Sail Away), Stevie Wonder (Living For The City) and Kermit (It Ain't Easy

Being Green – switched to 'black' for added meaning).

Geoff Brown



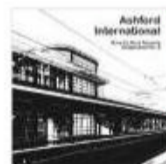
Various

★★★★

Ashford International: Gare Du Nord Records Compilation Vol. 2

GARE DU NORD. CD/DL

Twenty-three track compilation marking the label's eighth birthday.



Gare Du Nord pride themselves on an open door policy rather than a traditional A&R set-up, but many of the artists featured here make arty, wry, finely wrought music that gently pushes boundaries. Prime examples are Joss Cope's poppy paean to the Chinese military strategist, So Said Sun Tzu; Keiron Phelan's Satellite Hitori (Remix), which begins like a parody of Underworld's Born Slippy before settling into a breezy, urbane song with flutes and harps; and Those Unfortunates' terrace chant Hornsey Automatic FC, which manages to be both twee and boisterous. This selection includes the label's 'greatest hits' – such as former Pink Fairy Twink's beguiling 2017 single Dreams Turn Into Rainbows – rarities, and previews like Aldous Templeton's piano and chamber ensemble ballad, Are You Happy?, set for 2022 release. The standard is

by nature variable, but there is plenty to snag your attention.

Mike Barnes



Orchestre Poly-Rythmo De Cotonou Dahomey

★★★★

Le 'Sato'

ACID JAZZ. DL/LP

Prime voodoo funk, direct from the source.



Originally released in 1974, the fifth album in Acid Jazz's exemplary Albarika Store label reissue programme catches 'Prince' Mèlomè Clément's band paying tribute to the vodun (the traditional spiritual beliefs of their part of West Africa) that surrounded them as young men: the sato is the drum upon which the voodoo rhythms are played. The four tracks are less frantic and complex than much of what would come later: My Love is clearly a lament (there's no obvious reason for the English title, it's sung in Fon), but Gnonnou Ho features a lacerating guitar solo (presumably by Clément). Licensed from the band and mastered from the original tapes, this could turn into a shelf-filling campaign: the original Poly-Rythmo issued around 20 LPs before vocalist Vincent Ahéhinnou quit in 1978, but there were more

than 200 45s too. Your bank manager will understand.

David Hutcheon



Various

★★★★

Global Sounds

BOOMERANG. CD/DL/LP

Eclectic dance label's multi-genre set pulls in broken beat, jazzy and electronic.



In the two years since they set out their stall with the acid-fried funk of A Jazzual Experiment, Boomerang Records' embrace of diversity has majored on the weird and wonderful. *Global Sounds* follows suit, whirligigging with some of their key connections, be it Afriquoi's lead singer André Espeut showing his alchemical touch over Foot-shooter and Duke Hugh's broken beats, K.O.G. (energetic leader of Sheffield's Zongo Brigade) abandoning his comfort zone to ride Burland's pulsing electro, or an airy, meringue-light vocal turn from Bryony Jarman-Pinto. Sustained highs arrive with London Afrobeat Collective's house/talking drums fusion Power To The Women and the velveteen tones of Cleveland Watkiss dropping through the octaves as Mark De Clive-Lowe's keys surge ever upwards on jazzy beat-monster Vivid Dreams. Dancing may prove unavoidable.

Andy Cowan

Petula Clark

★★★★

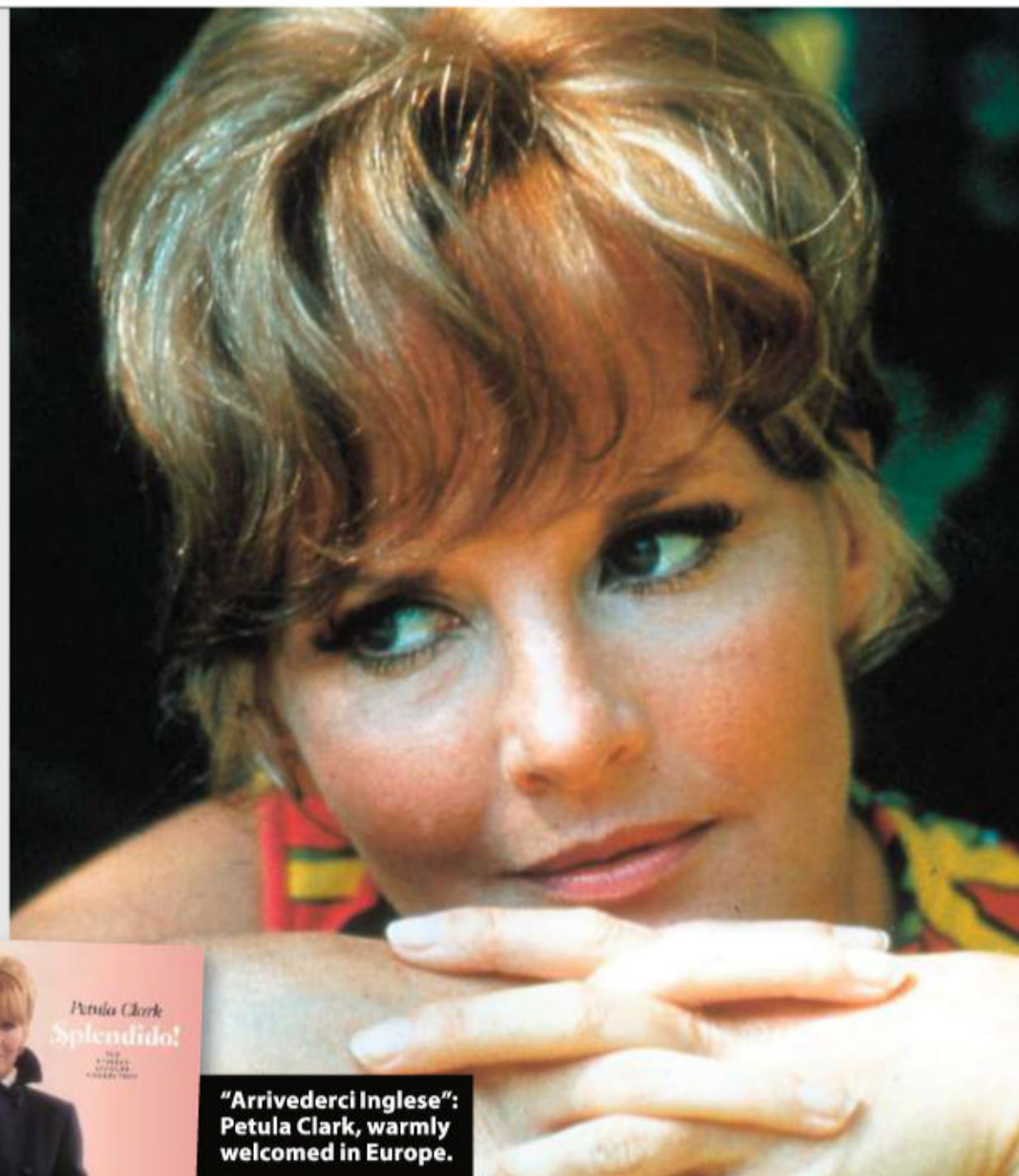
Splendido!

ACE. CD/DL

Over two discs, the Italian singles 1962 to 1970.

AT ONE point, Petula Clark had more success on mainland Europe than in the UK and almost gave up singing in her native tongue. Then Downtown hit. It's easy to see why foreign audiences loved her so much: not only was her command of French, German, Spanish and Italian excellent, but she seemed less encumbered and more expressive singing in another language; see Ciao Ciao, the Italian take on Downtown. Perhaps it's due to overfamiliarity with the original, but it's somehow richer, more rewarding in Italian. As is Quelli Che Hanno Un Cuore (Anyone Who Had A Heart) in a soulful performance to rival Dionne's. Her versions of original Italian songs also thrill, such as Invece No, which she performed at the San Remo song festival in 1965. Full of whirlwind drama, it places her in Mina territory.

Lois Wilson



"Arrivederci Inglese": Petula Clark, warmly welcomed in Europe.

Top draw: Super Furry Animals (from left) Dafydd Ieuan, Cian Ciaran, Gruff Rhys, Guto Pryce, Huw Bunford.



2001: A Space Oddity

Crank calling, tank-driving, Paul McCartney-crunching: the Welsh Britpop outriders' weird apogee. By **Pat Gilbert**.

Super Furry Animals

★★★★★

Rings Around The World

BMG. CD/DL/LP

IT'S NOT exactly rock's greatest 'what if?' but it's an interesting scenario to chew on nonetheless. In summer 2001, having recorded Juxtaposed With U, a glitzy, American-sounding soul extravaganza, ornamented with lush strings and dancing electronic bleeps, Super Furry Animals knew they had a potentially massive global hit on their hands. So why not ask – a prelapsarian – Bobby Brown to sing it? And, while you're at it, reach out to East 17's Brian Harvey too?

Neither man returned the call, it transpired, which in the sleevenotes to this expansive 20th anniversary reissue, SFA bassist Guto Pryce suggests was due to a suspicion "we were taking the piss, which we probably were." Instead, singer Gruff Rhys

sang his vocals through a vocoder, the single stalled at Number 14 in the UK charts, and perhaps the one chance the Furies had to cross over to the mainstream and become million-sellers evaporated. Which must have come as a huge disappointment to Sony, who had rescued the group from the debris of Creation Records' crash in 1999, and pumped hundreds of grand into facilitating the recordings that label supremo Rob Stringer believed would deliver the Welsh Britpop outriders the international smash they so richly deserved.

But while *Rings Around The World* would be, relative to its cost (which included a 5.1 surround-sound mix and accompanying DVD), a commercial failure, there can be no doubt it was an extraordinary artistic triumph – indeed, the zenith in creativity of a *sui generis* group for whom colliding together techno, harmony pop, soft rock, folk, country and psychedelia seemed an intuitive and singular vocation.

Part-recorded at Bearsville studio at the end of a US tour to promote their quickfire Welsh-language LP *Mwng*, *Rings*. . . would consciously channel the spirit of that studio's celebrated habitué, Todd Rundgren, adopting his painstaking and unorthodox '70s recording MO to create tracks such as Receptacle For The Respectable, a song



(if it is a song) that shifts from breezy sunshine pop to The Move to Bacharach-style easy listening, only to end up in a nightmare of grinding white noise techno. A sporting Paul McCartney even chomps

on a stick of celery, reprising his cameo on The Beach Boys' Vega-Tables (albeit down a phone line).

Allied to the fascinating musical amalgams – Tim Hardin meets jungle on No Sympathy; Crosby, Stills & Nash N harmony clusters versus crunchy indie rock on Sidewalk Serfer Girl; Duane Eddy takes on Amon Düül on (Drawing) Rings Around The World – is lyrical subject matter that suggests a real-life universe demanding an unhinged soundtrack, whether it's interns 'pleasuring' US Presidents, individuals waking from 15-year slumbers, insane TV evangelists, or the (near) title track with its unappreciated phone calls to random people around the globe.

Rings Around The World was perhaps the last hurrah for post-modernist rock, when mashing up genres was still fruitful and fun, and it was never bettered by its makers. The various reissue formats here offer a whopping 75 unreleased tracks from the sessions – albeit mostly remixes and demos, though the four 'proper' outtakes include a hymnal scuzzy funk gem called John Spex and the brilliantly bizarre Chihuahua – so you certainly won't need any other music to entertain you for a while...



Dr Robert Blackman

★★★★

The Unimaginable Dreamworks

RE:WARM. DL/LP

Another day in the sun for a California therapist's bizarre vanity recordings.

Dr Robert Blackman worked as a chiropractor in San Francisco over the 1970s and 1990s. His interest in music was first evidenced in 1976 with an LP on his own Riverwinds imprint. The label folded in 1987 after two creepy semi-hip-hop 12-inches credited to King Lovsexx. In between, Blackman issued a mini album and two 12-inches. *The Unimaginable Dreamworks* samples these. Unsurprisingly, it is strange stuff. Blackman's declamatory voice isn't built to carry a tune so there are lots of female backing vocals. His musings – "there are no answers, there are no questions" – are framed in a stabbing-synth, slap-bassing lightweight disco akin to a threadbare take on The Waitresses. In '84, he promoted the *Peace Is Alive* mini-LP by showering San Francisco with thousands of leaflets from a dope smuggler's plane. The city charged him for the clean-up.

Kieron Tyler

of Starbucks branches; tracks were heard on the TV shows *Nip/Tuck* and *Boston Legal*, and an ad for trousers). Heard now, the deft fusion of jazz, R&B and light touches of her adopted country France's chanson still sounds assured. A bonus previously unreleased July 2005 live show from Spain's Vitoria-Gasteiz Jazz Festival, featuring different musicians, energises *Careless Love's* material by a more sinuous and spontaneous delivery.

Kieron Tyler



Rory Gallagher

★★★★

Rory Gallagher: 50th Anniversary Edition

UMC. CD/DL/LP

Solo debut by Co. Donegal guitar great gets five-disc box set treatment.



Having left Taste in 1970 due to managerial/intra-band tensions, everything clicked for Rory Gallagher in his new, self-named power trio. Led Zeppelin's Peter Grant helped nail a lucrative deal with Polydor, Eddie Offord engineered while Rory produced, and Gallagher's new Belfast-raised foils Gerry McAvoy (bass) and Wilgar Campbell (drums) nourished his electric/acoustic blues vision via a hard-hitting telepathy. A typically gutsy "Pop Deux" concert filmed for French TV in 1971 – Gallagher a magus in double denim; five choice *Rory Gallagher* tracks premiered a month before the LP's release – offers delicious context here, while the accompanying hard-back book with informative essays by McAvoy and RG's brother Dónal will delight aficionados. BBC Radio session tracks cement the notion that Gallagher brought his all to every show (try his take on Otis Rush's *It Takes Time*).

James McNair



All Night Radio

★★★★

Spirit Stereo Frequency

BIG POTATO. DL/LP

Beachwood Sparks duo's jubilant psych-pop venture.



In 2007, Los Angeles Dave Scher (guitar) and Jimi Hey (drums) imagined a mystery radio station at the far end of the dial, playing a mash-up of all their favourite stuff. Their attempt to synthesise the playlist over 10 free-wheeling segments partly aligned with the Byrds-country-psych leanings of their band Beachwood Sparks, and no surprise that The Beach Boys and The Beatles are totems here, yet there were just as many good '90s vibra-

tions, kicking up the same cosmic dust as Mercury Rev and the Elephant 6 mob. There are concise songs – *Sky Bicycle* is gorgeous; the closing title track is both the longest song and the best hook – but the greatest impression is a manic, whooshing energy, like the listener is strapped to a dizzily looping rollercoaster of sound. It's so good, you wonder why they never tried again.

Martin Aston



Joseph Spence

★★★★

Encore

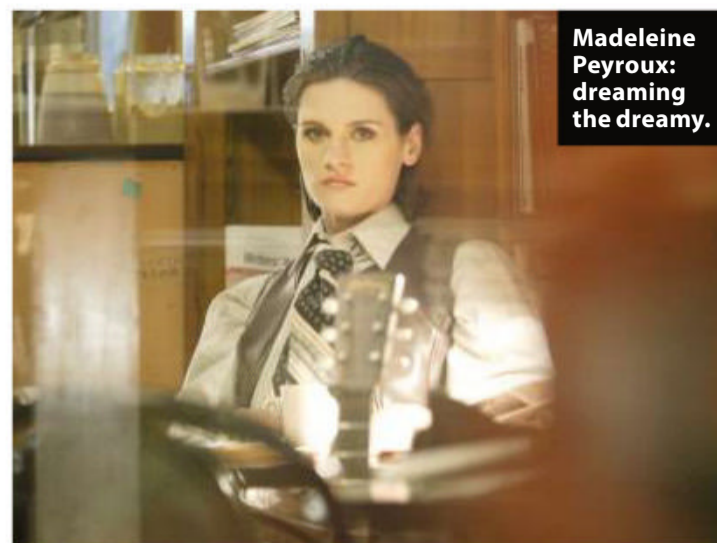
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Unheard recordings by the Bahamian guitar master.



Born in 1910, the late Bahamian folk maverick Joseph Spence performed

traditional songs and spirituals in a low grunt that resembled cartoon character Popeye. His guitar inventions were equally eccentric: playing the bass parts on low strings, melody on the high ones, creating a simultaneous dialogue between both while each shifted tempos. This created a challenge for the many guitarists and reverent fans, like Taj Mahal, Ry Cooder and Richard Thompson, who've all tried to duplicate him. Spence has often been called "the folk guitarist's Thelonious Monk", and like Monk, he sang solfeggio – melodically groaning underneath instrumental sections. These newly-released recordings were mostly taped while he was in New York in



Madeleine Peyroux: dreaming the dreamy.

1965 for a concert: some recorded at the show, and some at producer Peter K Siegel's parents' apartment. Beyond Spence's technical magic is the unfettered joy that animates every note.

Michael Simmons



Various

★★★★

Good As Gold: Artefacts Of The Apple Era (1967-1975)

GRAPEFRUIT. CD

Fascinating comp examines the outer reaches of the grandest Beatles folly.

Apple might have been a great opportunity for too many great opportunists, but it was also a vibrant creative hub comprising record label, publishing and studio. These 107 tracks spread over five discs are hit-free beyond Stealer's Wheel's *Stuck In The Middle With You* (recorded at Apple with Leiber & Stoller), but they embrace pop, psychedelia,

novelty and '60s Britpop. Surprises abound, be it the guitar riff on The Fire's *Creation-esque Father's Name Is Dad*, which resurfaced to underpin Pet Shop Boys' *I Didn't Get Where I Am Today*, and Chris 'Frank Sidebottom' Sievey's *Watercolour View*, recorded after he accepted demo time in return for abandoning his Apple sit-in. The Beatles appear in passing: there's Grapefruit's *Lullaby*, the sole Lennon/McCartney production; Brute Force's *King Of Fuh*, which tickled George Harrison's ribald funny bone; and Tony Hazzard's snappy song entitled *Paul McCartney*.

John Aizlewood



VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

Spiritualized Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space

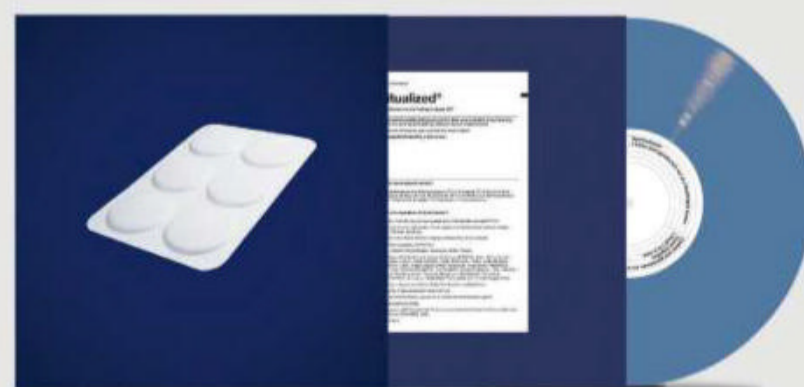
FAT POSSUM. DL/LP

Back in 1997, this writer commissioned now Poet Laureate Simon Armitage to review some new albums for a fledgling men's magazine. The results were surprising. Praise was showered on the bleak Northern optimism of The Verve's *Urban Hymns*, but Jason Pierce's lyrics for this – a masterpiece, surely? – were dismissed as naive, derivative, almost beneath contempt. Assembled from a series of US

recording sessions (including two weeks in Memphis with Jim Dickinson), with contributions from Dr. John, the London Community Gospel Choir, and pedal-steel maestro B.J. Cole, *LAGWAFIS* remains sonically astonishing, a junkie love letter to Southern soul, Elvis and The Jordanaires caught between painless dope bliss and symphonic night-sweats chaos.

Armitage? He's right. Pierce's lyrics are facile, but they work, they contain the simplicity of nursery rhyme, childlike inspiration salvaged from beneath the soft weight of heavy drugs. Fittingly, the vinyl – in reworked artwork by Mark Farrow, who created the original blister pack – now sounds enormous and all-enveloping in a way that it never did in '97.

Andrew Male



Madeleine Peyroux

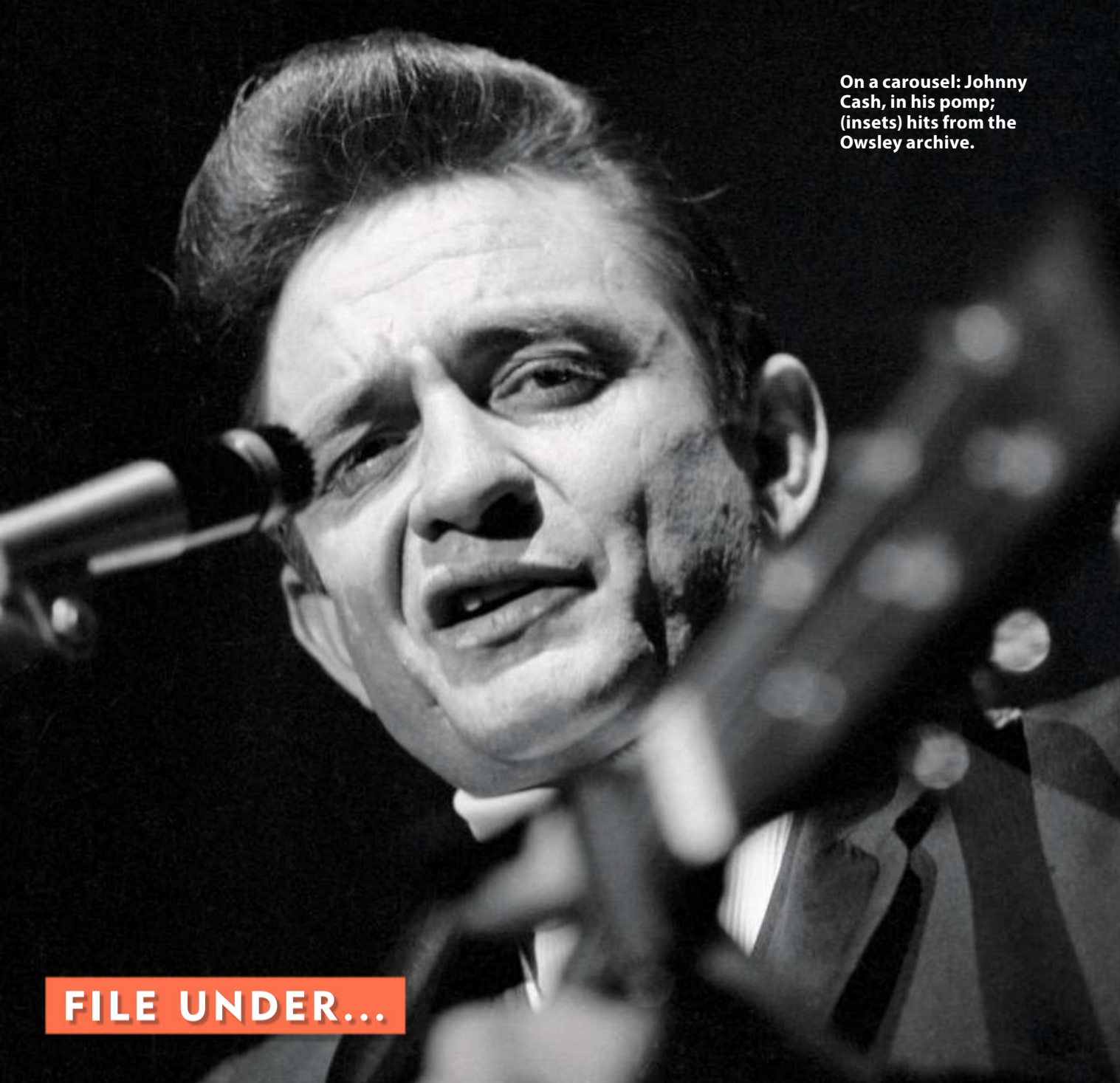
★★★★

Careless Love (Deluxe Edition)

CRAFT. CD/LP

Adding an on-stage interpretation brings a fresh slant on a global success.

In the essay accompanying this reissue of her 2004 breakthrough second album *Careless Love*, Madeleine Peyroux recalls producer Larry Klein: "He wanted to make a record that would sound like the dream of an album." After her follow-up to 1996's *Dreamland* arrived, dreaming went on hold when *Careless Love* became a worldwide best seller, helped on its way by astute marketing (it was displayed on the counter



On a carousel: Johnny Cash, in his pomp; (insets) hits from the Owsley archive.

FILE UNDER...



Trip advisor

The archive of Owsley Stanley, psychedelic chemist of sound, bursts open. Getting high on residual fumes, **Jim Irvin**.

AUGUSTUS OWSLEY Stanley, sound engineer, inventor, psychedelic chemist, jeweller, and eater of nothing but meat, was one of the more eccentric figures populating the long, strange story of the Grateful Dead. He developed their unique sound system while manufacturing the acid that fuelled the early years of their career. Known to them as Bear, his tenure with the band was interrupted by a spell in jail in 1967 and never quite recovered, as those who replaced him were reluctant to step down once he was freed. Instead, he ran the house sound system at the Carousel Ballroom, a venue operated as a collective by the Dead and several other Bay Area bands: Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Big Brother And The Holding Company.

To fine-tune the sound there, and help him gauge what the audience was experiencing, Owsley constantly recorded the music passing through the building. He called these

tapes Bear's Sonic Journals and amassed 1,300 of them. Highlights are being regularly released by the Owsley Stanley Foundation; a non-profit organisation dedicated to preserving the archive. So far, they've issued shows by The Allman Brothers Band, New Riders Of The Purple Sage, Commander Cody And His Lost Planet Airmen and others. The latest brace feature consummate showman Johnny Cash recorded days before the release of his epochal *At Folsom Prison* and shape-shifting troubadour Tim Buckley, captured on two consecutive nights.

Naturally, the Foundation is keen to sell the idea that Owsley was "an uncompromising master of live concert recording", although it must be said that his balancing methods seem unconventional to modern ears. Tim Buckley's *Merry-Go-Round At The Carousel June 15-16, 1968* ★★ ★ (OSF) has bass player John Miller loud –

sometimes distorted – and alone in the right-hand channel. On the left sits Buckley's voice and 12-string guitar with David Friedman's vibraphone behind him, relatively hard to discern. Carter Collins' percussion drifts between the left and centre field. Friedman is slightly more audible on the following day's set, and Miller less hot

"June sings a Carter Family medley while Cash goes off 'swallowing'."

and growly. Some songs have their fronts cut off. It's not a hi-fi recording as we'd understand it today – the generous sleeve notes explain why – but undoubtedly characterful, capturing Buckley freewheeling out of folk rock towards jazz in the more protean style of his hero Fred Neil. Indeed, Neil's *Merry-Go-Round* is quoted in the extended *Strange Feelin' Suite* that closes the second show, where Buckley expands the as yet unfinished *Strange Feelin'* with several of his own earlier works and things like Leadbelly's *In The Pines*. As with many Buckley recordings it can be mesmerising, it can get tedious, but it's never less than fascinating to hear where he goes on the journey.

There's a similar mental adjustment required while listening to Johnny Cash's *At The Carousel Ballroom, April 24th, 1968* ★★★★★ (OSF/Renew/BMG). Cash, instead of being centre front, is off to the right while the Tennessee Three are all bunched on the left. Cash seems to have a tendency to drift off-mike occasionally too.

Perhaps mindful of visiting a hotbed of the counterculture, he opens with *Cocaine Blues*, and includes some Dylan tunes and socially aware material like chain gang blues *Going To Memphis*. Although he's yet to ascend to his lofty place in the pantheon, Cash is in his pomp here, sounding like he's having a great time with June (singing a Carter Family medley while Cash goes off "swallowing") and his band, and putting on a fine show. Six thousand words of detailed notes by Bob Weir, John Carter Cash and the album's producers add considerable value. One to treasure for Cash fans.

Courtesy of Owsley Stanley Foundation



Alex Chilton

★★★★★

Like Flies On Sherbert
SUNDAZED. LP

Inaugural solo LP recorded over three nights in Memphis. Heavy drinking involved.

On this 1979 solo debut, Alex Chilton tore up the rulebook he'd written with The Box Tops and Big Star and made an album that was messy and pitted with imperfections. It was the album's producer Jim Dickinson who convinced Chilton to leave the mistakes in, so we hear mikes being dropped and tape hiss and false starts and chugging guitar, played by Dickinson, that's so rudimentary it's endearing, and Chilton fluffing lines but sounding like he doesn't give a monkeys. "A positive statement about a period in my life that wasn't positive," he described it. The album chimed perfectly with punk's DIY ethos and presaged indie pop's shambling, and turned songs as disparate as KC And The Sunshine Band's Boogie Shoes and Jimmy Newman's Alligator Man into lo-fi outsider anthems.

Lois Wilson



Karate

★★★★★

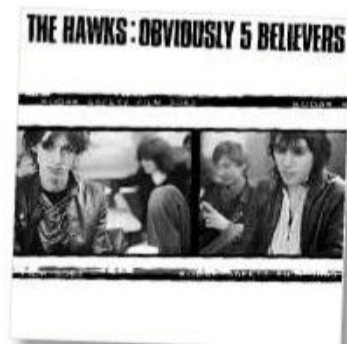
In Place Of Real Insight
NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

Landmark 1997 LP by Boston emo-jazz slowcore quartet gets a welcome reissue.

In hindsight, the mid-'90s US underground looks like a place of musical and emotional confusion. Few bands captured that sense of stylistic chaos better than Boston's Karate. If their self-titled 1996 debut channelled the lyrical anger and emotional uncertainty of the DC post-hardcore scene as well as the urgent metalcore of fellow mid-'90s Massachusettsans Converge, this follow-up drew as much from the Minutemen and Sonny Sharrock as it did Fugazi or Crazy Horse. Graduates of the Berklee College of Music, the group began to open their sound, both sonically and stylistically,

with the twin guitars of Eamonn Vitt and singer/guitarist Geoff Farina moving freely from proto-math-rock with weirdy jazz time signatures, to lyrical post-rock explorations (The New Hangout Condition) and exquisitely intricate power-pop (New Martini). Farina has battled for years to get these albums reissued. It's been worth the wait.

Andrew Male



The Hawks

★★★★

Obviously 5 Believers
SEVENTEEN. CD/LP

Long lost album by Stephen Duffy's teenage band.

After quitting Duran Duran moments before they became '80s pop sensations, Stephen Duffy took a trademark left turn, joining the remnants of Birmingham post-punkers TV Eye (including future Jacobite Dave Kusworth) for an ill-fated career twist that yielded just one rare 1980 single (Words Of Hope), and now these 10 songs captured on cassette from 1979-81. The wounded power of Duffy's best material shines through Aztec Moon's lonely blues, Jazz Club's English wistfulness and the wild-eyed shopping adventures of Big Store ("I'm going out tonight and leaving God alone") – the Duran-era song he belatedly revived with Nick Rhodes (as The Devils) in 2003. While the Lilac Time leader has flitted in and out of the Zeitgeist ever since (co-writing Robbie Williams' *Intensive Care*), these resuscitated, not-quite-demo-quality live recordings underline his craftsmanship and cocksure way with a dry, melancholic lyric.

Andy Cowan

COMING NEXT MONTH...

My Morning Jacket, Efterklang, Pip Blom, The The, Pastor T.L. Barrett, The War On Drugs, The Pop Group, Black Francis, Circuit Des Yeux, Roger Taylor, John Coltrane, Coldplay, Brandi Carlile (below), Black Sabbath and more.



REISSUES EXTRA



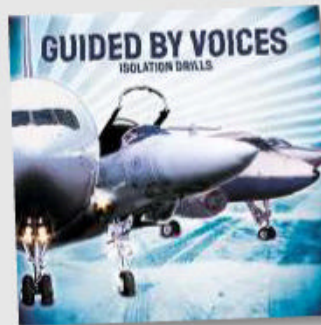
The Cinematic Orchestra

★★★★★

Ma Fleur

NINJA TUNE. LP

2007 third album on clear vinyl. First time on LP for three, urbane soul/jazz extra tracks: Flowers, Colours and their gorgeous cover of Fontella Bass's song Talking About Freedom, featuring her own imperious vocal. JB



Guided By Voices

★★★★★

Isolation Drills

TVT/ORCHARD. LP

GBV's overlooked major label LP is home to some Robert Pollard greats (Chasing Heather Crazy; Glad Girls' rave-up; introspective comedown Sister I Need Wine). Now remastered by RP for 20th anniversary edition on gatefold double vinyl with a fold-out sleeve for extra-high kicks. JB



Pixies

★★★★

Trompe Le Monde

4AD. LP

Made on the run from each other, the rote material (a Mary Chain cover?!) on the last Pixies album betrayed fatigue after four years' creative frenzy. Yet it still boasts canonical greats (Planet Of Sound) and quirky treats (Space; U-Mass) attacked with vim. Now on 30th birthday green vinyl. KC



Suede

★★★★★

Coming Up

DEMON. CD/DL/LP

Twenty-five years on, the story of how Suede set about toughing out the loss of guitarist Bernard Butler and glam-dunking such gutter/stars vignettes as Trash and Beautiful Ones into the pop charts. A second disc of 17 B-sides extends the moment with élan, and the euphoria still translates. IH



Booker T. & The M.G.'s

★★★★★

The Complete Stax Singles

REAL GONE MUSIC. LP

Two sets of funky instrumentals from the Memphis label's studio band. Vol. 1 (1962-1967) ranges from foundational Green Onions and Hip-Hug Her to Christmas hits, on red vinyl. Vol. 2 (1968-1974) – blue vinyl, all breezy – includes cricket fan fave, Soul Limbo. JB



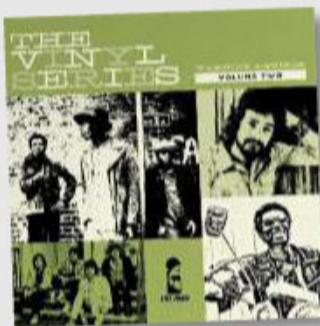
Richard Thompson

★★★★★

Mirror Blue

REAL GONE MUSIC. LP

Clear, double vinyl for RT's 1994 LP. Hamstrung by Mitchell Froom's busy production at the time, to ears more used to digital compression it now sounds quite organic. Strong material includes confirmed classic, Beeswing; The King Of Bohemia and I Can't Wake Up To Save My Life (Bob Mould was listening). JB



Various

★★★★★

The Vinyl Series Vol 2

UME. LP

Second Chris Blackwell-curated comp tracking the history of Island Records, Vol 2 spans '62-69 and folk scene finds Nick Drake and John Martyn. Rock arrives forcefully on side two with Free and Traffic, while The Heptones, Toots and Jimmy Cliff reaffirm the label's core reggae values, ahead of Marley's arrival on Vol 3. JB



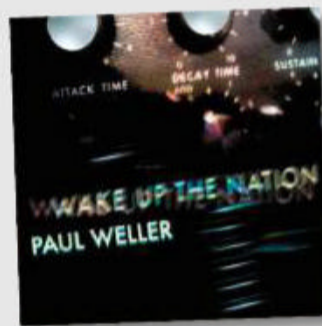
Various

★★★★

Punk And Disorderly: The Albums

CAPTAIN OI. CD

The three original 1981-83 compilations of UK lumpen-punk aggro (plus Vol. 1's anomalous inclusion of Dead Kennedys) now in a 3-CD box, each with bonus tracks. Amid much grunt-level rabble-rousery, an abundance of rough diamonds from Discharge, Action Pact, Vice Squad et al. KC



Paul Weller

★★★★★

Wake Up The Nation

UMC/ISLAND. LP

Released digitally last November, Weller's most experimental album is afforded more of a remix than a remaster for its 10th Anniversary Edition, with bass riff uplifted on opener Moonshine and more guitars and power all round on the title track. But: No Tears To Cry is still beautiful, Trees still crackers. DE

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VERSATILE DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★
MOJO CLASSIC

★★★★★
EXCELLENT

★★★★
GOOD

★★★
DISAPPOINTING

★
BEST AVOIDED

☆
DEPLORABLE



"Music never leaves you alone": The Sand Band's David McDonnell.

CREDITS

Tracks: Set Me Free / To Be Where You Are / Song That Sorrow Sings / The Secret Chord / Open Your Wings / Interlude / The Gift & The Curse / Someday The Sky / Burn This House / Hourglass / All Through The Night / If This Is Where It Ends / Outro

Personnel: David McDonnell (acoustic guitars, effects, electric guitar, organ), Scott Marmion (acoustic guitars, electric guitar, steel guitar), Jay Sharrock, Ian Skelly (drums), John Head (guitar)

Producers: David McDonnell and Scott Marmion, mastered by Robin Schmidt

Release: Jan 2011

Recorded: The Ether, Greenbank Drive, Liverpool

Chart peak: n/a

Available: Heavenly (LP); Pias (digital)

discovered during the early noughties boom of online file sharing, persuades the listener to give in to sleep ("I am completely at ease in mind and body. I am serene and tranquil"). For a nocturnal song-suite, which suffers tribulation in its long night of the soul, it's a perfect ending.

With the merest overdubs in a rehearsal space in Dale Street – Ian Skelly and Jay Sharrock played drums, while guitar was added by Shack's John Head to Hourglass and the title song – McDonnell finished work in summer 2010. "They were just demos," he says, "but when I showed it to James [Skelly] from The Coral he said, 'Do not touch that, that's done.'"

With The Sand Band signed to the Deltasonic label and a group formed to play the songs live, support from the music press and radio followed *All Through The Night's* January 2011 release. Yet McDonnell, who realised that he did not feel the songs suited a full band playing them, soon withdrew and joined Noel Gallagher's High-Flying Birds.

"I was scared of showing that much of myself," says McDonnell. "It was too raw. Then it was, 'Shit, I've got to play the songs and be in this mood all the time.'"

I just felt scared. I kind of ran from it. I probably saw joining Noel as an escape, but it didn't work out."

A second Sand Band album was mooted in 2012, but apart from a cover of Billie Holiday's Don't Explain appearing on BandCamp in 2013, all was silence. In time McDonnell took an office job working in clean energy. "There's that saying, when the lights go down, leave them down," he says. "I'd just had an enough of it. I wouldn't even insult music by putting stuff out in that frame of mind."

Now, with *All Through The Night* getting a get a 10-year vinyl reissue for Love Record Stores Day on September 4, McDonnell is planning the band's belated second album,

Leave Some Light Behind, though Marmion, who's now a tree surgeon, will not be involved.

"Music never leaves you alone," explains McDonnell. "I'm just really into it again. I've come back to the songs and they're just kind of ready to go, I'm just adding new ones, rearranging... the instrumentation is actually a little different, not so sparse."

He remains happy with *All Through The Night*, though, and would be happy to play the songs live.

"I'm out of the space I was in when I made it," he says, "[but] lots of people have travelled through that space. They still discover it when they need it. There was an honesty to it which I don't think I'll ever be able to recreate... I was definitely looking for something, and I found it."

Ian Harrison

Perchance to dream

This month's forgotten gem in rock's lost property office: a beautiful Mersey balm for insomnia and *Weltschmerz*.

The Sand Band All Through The Night

DELTASONIC, 2011

BY WINTER 2009, Toxteth-born guitarist David McDonnell had already played in Richard Ashcroft's live band and deputised for Bill Ryder-Jones in The Coral. But now his world had reduced to a set of haunting songs, a vintage cassette 8-track and a top floor flat with high ceilings and wooden floorboards overlooking Sefton Park in Liverpool. He called the recording space, on Greenbank Drive, "The Ether."

"I remember saying, 'there's something brilliant about this room,'" he says today. "Like it was on a ley line or something. I kind of shut myself away, by choice, and recorded mostly at night, when the machinery shuts down and the telephone lines are quiet and the airwaves are free. You think differently in the small hours..."

All Through The Night, the one album so far released as The Sand Band, occupies that same rarefied metaphysical hinterland. Hushed, acoustic and largely drum-free, it was created from solitude and interior turmoil – spiritual, emotional and mental – meeting and finding resolution. "I was untethered to anything at that time," says McDonnell. "It was like building a ship around yourself, to go and do something on your own for the first time."

With influences including Neil Young, Nick Cave, Leonard Cohen, Richard Hawley, Bert Jansch and Spiritualized's *Ladies And*

Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space, the subtly textured, beautifully melodic album draws the listener into an oddly spacious world of illumination and shadows. It immediately strikes a harrowed note with the broken, lovelorn Set Me Free, but as McDonnell cautions, "There was heartbreak, but that's not all there was. Scott [Marmion, ex- of Peel faves Ella Guru] was writing it with me, and he wasn't heartbroken."

Instead, we find the predicaments of existence co-existing with intimations of magic, as when genuine birdsong, heard outside Greenbank Drive one morning, accompanies the Jackson C Frank-esque Song That Sorrow Sings (McDonnell also recalls the room filling with sunlight and an unusual silence while recording it). Glimpses of realities beyond the familiar continue with The Secret Chord's pursuit of unheard music and Someday The Sky's riddles of disappearance, while Burn This House and The Gift & The Curse anticipate and ponder retribution.

"Music is an abstract thing and when you're doing it right it's all-encompassing," says McDonnell of the mystery process. "It flows through your body and you're looking at the other people around you, like, 'this is incredible.'"

With pedal steel player Marmion lending mellifluous, off-world country flavours, the velvet instrumental title track rises high enough to reveal the curvature of the Earth. Last song If This Is Where It Ends/ Outro achieves closure, as the calming voice of an anonymous American hypnotherapist,



"I was untethered to anything."

DAVID McDONNELL

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10 The Supremes

The Story Of The Supremes

UMC/MOTOWN, 2008

You say: "Very full picture of the group's rich story" Kathy Robertson, via e-mail

The Supremes have been well served in the compilation department ever since 1974's triple vinyl *Anthology* (credited to Diana Ross & The Supremes but full of hits from before Ross's name was featured), which set a benchmark for Motown collections with 35 tracks from '62-69. 2001's 2-CD *Anthology* has 'Supremes', 'Diana Ross &...' and 'Supreme Stylists' sections, the last focusing on cover versions (Beatles, Sam Cooke, Rodgers & Hart, Disney). Released to tie in with a V&A exhibition, *The Story Of...* continues the group's career post-Ross on the final 14 selections (of 50), but as a compilation cuts it: Ross-Ballard-Wilson, with HDH, making sweet soul-pop music.



CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Diana Ross and Supremes LPs. Next month we want your Ethiopian jazz Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Ethio jazz' and we'll print the best comments.



4 The Supremes

Sing Motown

TAMLA MOTOWN, 1967

You say: "The label's greatest hits sung by the label's flagship girl group. Perfect." Alice Clark, via e-mail.

Originally released in the US as *The Supremes Sing Holland-Dozier-Holland* but renamed *Sing Motown* in the UK thanks to the label's stronger identity. By now, The Supremes almost always sang HDH and here, at their '60s best, Eddie, Lamont and Brian shuffle through their catalogue to add readings of Four Tops hits like I'll Turn To Stone and It's The Same Old Song, Martha And The Vandellas' Heatwave and The Isley Brothers' I Guess I'll Always Love You, on to recent chart-toppers You Keep Me Hangin' On and Love Is Here And Now You're Gone. Other titles written for the trio include Love Is In Our Hearts and There's No Stopping Us Now. Stopping, in fact, came next for HDH – a dispute with Gordy leading to their exit from the label.

Alamy, Jessica Rinaldi

Diana Ross

With and after The Supremes, Motown's leading lady. By **Geoff Brown.**

THE FIRST album Diana Ross sang on, *Meet The Supremes*, was released on December 8, 1962 in the US. *Thank You*, her first new album in 15 years but her umpteenth release, is reviewed on page 96. By any measure, that's a long career in the studio. For most of the '60s she was a major voice (and just about the most recognised face) at The Sound Of Young America as part of the extraordinary roster of talent Berry Gordy assembled on the Motown, Tamla and other labels in Detroit. Launched as a solo artist at the end of the '60s, she again seized the opportunities Gordy's ambition created for her.

The temptation with Diana Ross, particularly during her Supremes era, is to recommend a comprehensive greatest hits collection or 45s compilation. As such, 2011's 3-CD *Diana Ross & The Supremes' 50th Anniversary: The Singles Collection: 1961-1969* is the cream, but it's a Hip-O Select limited edition.

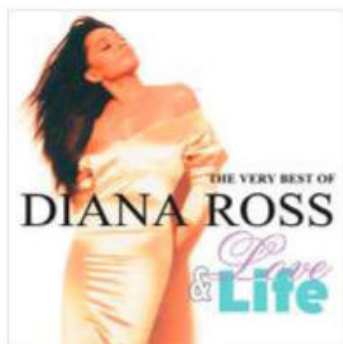
Her solo era, from 1970, didn't falter, with Number 1s *Reach Out*

And Touch (Somebody's Hand) and Ain't No Mountain High Enough in the US and I'm Still Waiting in the UK. During that first flowering, she also gave birth to two daughters (Rhonda, 1971; Tracee Joy, 1972), filmed 1972 release *Lady Sings The Blues*, recorded its OST, and released the studio albums *Diana Ross*, *Everything Is Everything* and *Surrender*, started work on a duets album with Marvin Gaye plus *Blue* and *To The Baby*. When she lost out to Liza Minnelli for the Best Actress Oscar at the '73 Academy Awards, Gordy shelved the last three projects and focused on recreating Ross the pop star, a task that fell to Michael Masser, whose ballad *Touch*

Me In The Morning, co-written with lyricist Ron Miller, put her back at Number 1 (US; UK Number 9). The album of the same name just missed the UK Top 10.

In common with many great '60s pop and soul stars, Ross struggled to find an '80s style, and the '90s were unforgiving. But on-stage she has lately thrived – 2020's cancelled Glastonbury would have been a triumph.

"Her solo era, from 1970, didn't falter."



9 Diana Ross Love & Life

EMI, 2001

You say: "A one-stop shop. Ms Ross with The Supremes, duetting and solo." Pete Burgess, [mojo4music.com](#)

A comp that gathers the best parts of Ross's post-Motown solo career. After the Chic LP, she departed her longtime label for Capitol and took to producing herself with mixed results. *Why Do Fools Fall In Love* (1981), *Silk Electric* (1982) with an Andy Warhol-designed sleeve and a track, *Muscles*, written and produced by Michael Jackson, a floundering *Ross* (1983), *Swept Away* (1984) with its cover of a Dylan song: all were inconsistent at best, and Barry Gibb's involvement in 1985's *Eaten Alive* promised more than it delivered. However, in its 2-CD version, *Love & Life* offers the best of that era plus duets with The Temptations, Marvin Gaye and Lionel Richie, though it duplicates some solo and Supremes tracks on other selections.

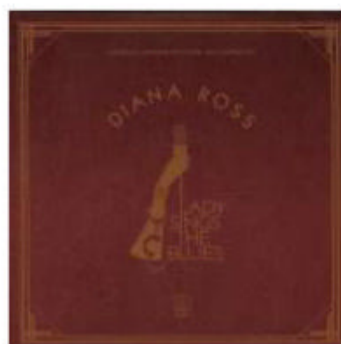


8 Diana Ross The Boss

MOTOWN, 1979

You say: "An album [with] classic tunes such as the title track, *It's My House* and *No One Gets The Prize*." Steven Neville, [mojo4music.com](#)

Strong support from MOJO readers for this late-'70s disco-era rematch with Ashford & Simpson, her most reliable go-to producers post-Holland-Dozier-Holland. Her post-Supremes career had started in 1970 with the A&S-produced *Diana Ross* (Reach Out And Touch (Somebody's Hand), You're All I Need To Get By, Ain't No Mountain High Enough, Keep An Eye etc), and the decade concluded with this brasher set on which *No One Gets The Prize* and *I Ain't Been Licked* set side one's assertive tone. On the second side the mood is more dynamic, from dancefloor uplift (*Once In The Morning*) to pop-catchy (*It's My House*), Sparkle's time-dated Michael Brecker sax solo and closing ballad *In The World*.



7 Diana Ross Lady Sings The Blues OST

TAMLA MOTOWN, 1972

You say: "Diana's first movie, showcasing fine interpretations of Billie Holiday classics." Nigel Maggs, via e-mail

The casting of Ross as Billie Holiday in the 1972 biopic *Lady Sings The Blues* raised eyebrows at best, caused apoplexy at worst. But her singing on the soundtrack turned out to be her best OST – as was her acting performance. With a band of seasoned jazz players working on arrangements by Oliver Nelson, Benny Golson and producer Gil Askey, Ross doesn't diligently mimic Lady Day but honours the material with few vocal histrionics. *Fine And Mellow* is just that, there are confident readings of *My Man*, *You've Changed*, *Good Morning Heartache*, even the indelible signatures *God Bless The Child* and *Lover Man* (Oh Where Can You Be?). *Blue*, an LP of jazz standards made at this time, was shelved 'til 2006.



6 Diana Ross And The Supremes Love Child

TAMLA MOTOWN, 1968

You say: "Title track takes in new territory lyrically." Nigel Maggs, via e-mail

In summer '67, Ross's name preceded The Supremes on the 45 *Reflections*, signalling the solo career that had seemed increasingly likely. The *Reflections* LP and the sacking of Florence Ballard did nothing to dispel the thought. Cindy Birdsong joined, LPs of songs from *Funny Girl* and with The Temptations sought to broaden their reach, until *Love Child*, the first set of new material since HDH quit Motown. Frank Wilson, Ashford & Simpson and others produced, the title track hit Number 1 in the US, *Some Things You Never Get Used To* was Top 30, and there are sweet versions of Bobby Taylor & The Vancouvers' *Does Your Mama Know About Me* and Smokey's *He's My Sunny Boy*.



5 Diana Ross Diana Ross

MOTOWN, 1976

You say: "Love Hangover... what a truly great dance record." Jack Eyres, via e-mail

Of the several songwriting and production teams used on this mid-'70s release, three ballad-based Michael Masser production/co-writes set the tone. Opening with the title song from the movie that gave her a second starring role, *Theme From Mahogany* (*Do You Know Where You're Going To*) was a lot better than its source film: *After You* is a similarly reflective ballad. But the standout inclusion by some distance is *Love Hangover*, a seven-minute dancefloor glide that starts at a lazy tread, waking and stretching until, after two minutes 40, Dave Blumberg's arrangement kicks the rhythm section into overdrive for five minutes of groove. Elsewhere, there's the sweet reading of *Smile*, the Charlie Chaplin co-write, recorded for *Blue*.



3 The Supremes Where Did Our Love Go

MOTOWN, 1964

You say: "Impossible to listen to without getting up to dance." Charles Etterlin, [mojo4music.com](#)

Only their second album but already it feels like a hits collection as Brian Holland's productions click. The title track's footstomps marched to the trio's first US Number 1 pop hit, *Baby Love* and *Come See About Me* were also US pop Number 1s, and the album featured 1963's *When The Lovelight Starts Shining Through His Eyes*, a confident romp of blaring horns with which Holland-Dozier-Holland shoved the group closer to the big hits. As one of their earliest LPs, the 'filler' often revealed the blood, sweat and tears invested in their development, here in the shape of two Smokey Robinson written and produced efforts – *A Breath Taking Guy's Lilt*; *Long Gone Lover's* bounce.



2 Diana Ross Diana

MOTOWN, 1980

You say: "More brilliance from Chic with one of their greatest singles in *Upside Down*." Drshaunie, Twitter

The marriage between Ross and the most distinctive and stylish producers of the era was hugely successful, fraught with post-production strife and, as a consequence, brief. But there is little doubt that Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers got her. Architects of the Chic sound, they updated Ross with a pop-soul-dance LP of variety and personality. Pop (*My Old Piano*; *Have Fun Again*), dance (*Upside Down*) and exuberance (*I'm Coming Out*) dominated conversation, but *Tenderness*, grounded by Edwards' nimble-fingered bass work, the quiet thought of *Friend To Friend* and *Give Up's* energy, with Rodgers' fleeting guitar solo, all work. 2003's Deluxe edition had Motown's mix, the mixes Chic submitted, plus a CD of *Diana: Dance*.



Diana Ross I'm Still Waiting

TAMLA MOTOWN, 1971

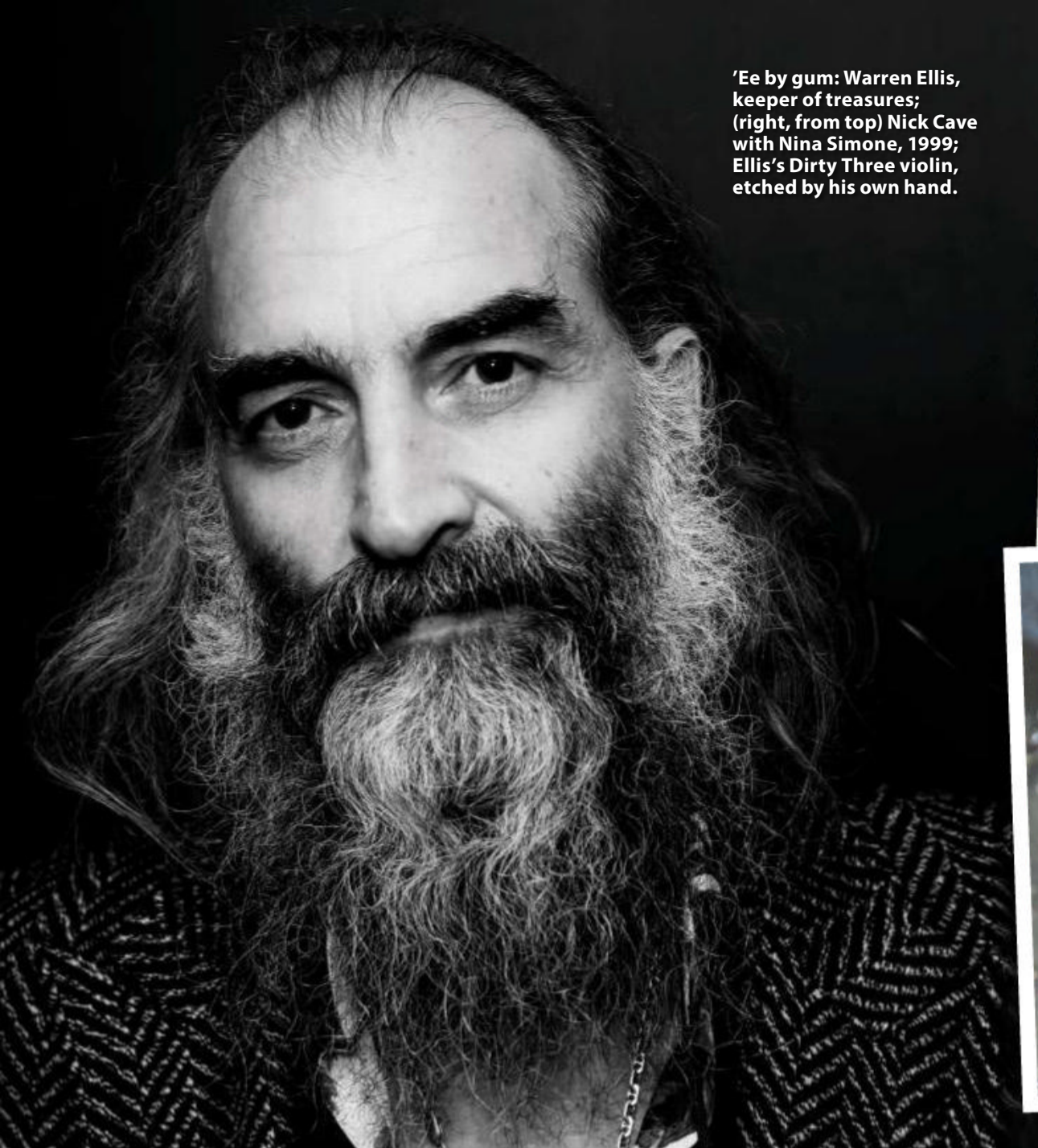
You say: "Bought this on the recommendation of Geoff Brown in MOJO 319. No regrets: just superb." Steve Temple via e-mail

First, the confusion. In the US, this album was titled *Surrender*. In the UK, using the same sleeve, it was retitled *I'm Still Waiting*, the London office having decided to open the album with the Deke Richards-written/produced new title track, a recent UK Number 1. The rest of the album had been produced and (mostly) co-written by Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson. If Holland-Dozier-Holland were the songwriters who unlocked Ross's pop potential within The Supremes, Ashford & Simpson found the key as a solo artist, as heard on the US title track, *Remember Me*, *I'll Settle For You* and *Did You Read The Morning Paper?* The only non-A&S song is a gentle reinterpretation of Holland-Dozier-Holland's *Reach Out I'll Be There*, arranged by Paul Riser. Elsewhere, there's a muscly *I'm A Winner*, and a brave run at *Didn't You Know* (You'd Have To Cry Sometime), brave because Gladys Knight had earlier given its definitive performance.

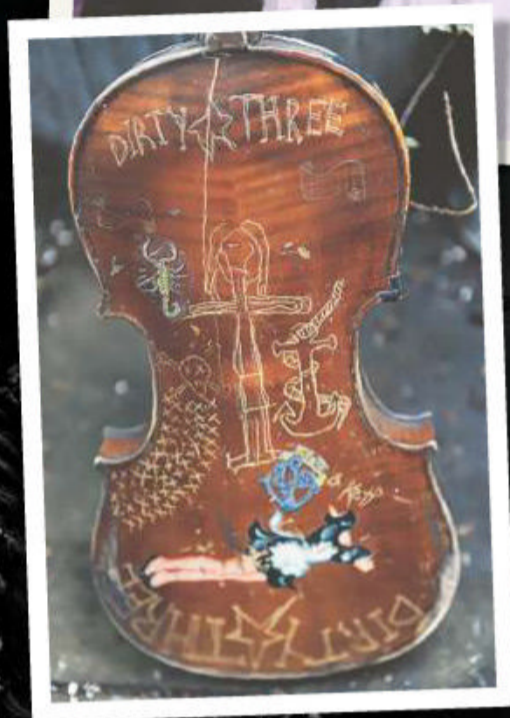
NOW DIG THIS



On DVD, *Reflections* captures The Supremes' (mostly) US TV performances, 1964-69, while Ross's famous 1983 solo show in Central Park, New York was finally released in 2003 – a small consolation for those disappointed by the Covid cancellation of her Glastonbury bill-topping date. The movie *Dreamgirls* famously fictionalises the rise of Diana, Mary and Florence as well as Motown itself. Among many books over the years, Ross's 1993 autobiography *Secrets Of A Sparrow* sets out her version, while *Call Her Miss Ross: The Unauthorised Biography*, is Randy J Taraborrelli's hefty tome published in 1989. It's been updated; *Going Back*, from 2004, offers a 'scrap-book' of mementoes and the late Mary Wilson has written *Dreamgirls* and, for the V&A tie-in, *Supreme Glamour*.



'Ee by gum: Warren Ellis, keeper of treasures; (right, from top) Nick Cave with Nina Simone, 1999; Ellis's Dirty Three violin, etched by his own hand.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- 1999 was a significant year for Ellis: he "became custodian of the gum", got married and was driven to get clean and sober by the death of his friend David McComb of The Triffids.
- In 2018, Ellis "seriously tried to buy" Alice Coltrane's ashram in California, wanting to preserve this "holy place of music". He was thwarted by the asking price. Later, the building burnt down in the 2019 fires.
- One of Ellis's other treasures was a letter from Jonathan Richman "telling me how to mike up the band for the next recording based on The Who concert he saw in 1969 with the drawing of the band and microphones."

All you gotta do is chew

Bad Seed finds heaven in a lump of grey in admirably bonkers memoir. By **Victoria Segal**.

Nina Simone's Gum

★★★★★

Warren Ellis

FABER. £20

IN THE Middle Ages, monks made reliquaries out of gold, silver and precious stones, richly enamelled to reflect the value of the object inside: a holy cloth, a saint's knucklebone, a splinter of the True Cross. The most priceless relic in Warren Ellis's lifelong collection of treasures, however, was housed for years within a yellow Tower Records bag and a plain white towel: a piece of gum chewed by Nina Simone on-stage at the South Bank Centre on July 1, 1999. How it came to be in his possession, and what the object has meant to him since, is the starting point for this beautiful, strikingly idiosyncratic book – part memoir, part essay, part conceptual art project, all testament to humans at their strangest and best.

The story of how Nina Simone demanded "some champagne, some cocaine and some sausages" before her performance at Nick Cave's 1999 Meltdown Festival has long since taken on the patina of legend. In his heartfelt introduction to Ellis's book, Cave describes how he was summoned to her dressing room to ensure he would announce her as "Doctor Nina Simone"; there is a wonderful photograph of him grinning with delight next to her while she glowers unimpressed. "She was the real deal, the baddest of them all," he says, "I knew that I stood within the presence of true greatness."

The show, her last in London before her death in 2003, was by all accounts remarkable, the ailing Simone transformed as she played, the audience left dazed and teary. "As I turned to leave," writes Cave, "Warren was crawling towards the stage, looking possessed and heading for the Steinway." It's comic, this moment of gum-harvesting from the top of

the piano, but it also, fittingly, has something of the supplicant or pilgrim about it. For from here, the gum becomes a kind of religious relic, nervously preserved by Ellis through his travels before he offers it to Cave for his Stranger Than Kindness exhibition at Copenhagen's Royal Danish Library in 2020. The chewing gum takes on a new life of its own, out of Ellis's anxious hands, into a

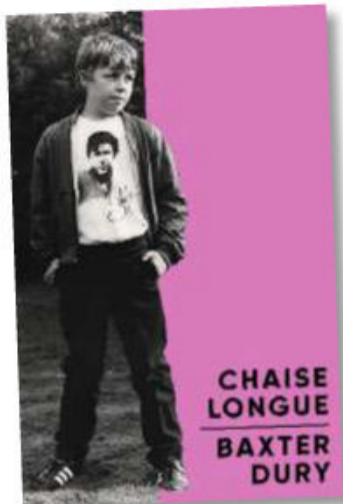
safe, onto a spotlit plinth.

Just what kind of man would see such signs and wonders in this disposable bit of ephemera forms the book's other fascinating narrative thread. Prone to visions and raptures from childhood, Ellis has been a collector all his life, picking up lead tyre weights on his paper round in Ballarat, Victoria, in the '70s. He's a keeper of treasure chests and "little museums" – cardboard greengrocer's boxes as a child; a Samsonite suitcase called "The Executive" when travelling with The Dirty Three or The Bad Seeds. A gifted musician from childhood, his first instrument, an accordion, was hauled from a rubbish dump: "It dawned on me that my musical life started from someone's trash." No wonder he sees significance where others might not.

Yet Ellis also shows how the gum starts to draw other people in, too – not just Cave ("a beautiful friend") but those charged with looking after the artefact; curators, travel companions, the sculptor Hannah Upritchard, who he nervously asks to cast the gum in case it gets lost. It moves beyond relic-hood to become a transmitter of ideas, a way of thinking about art, inspiration, music, triggering ideas for statues, jewellery, a house. It's allowed this book to exist, too, a beautiful little reliquary for Ellis's ecstatic story.

"I knew I stood within the presence of true greatness."

NICK CAVE ON NINA SIMONE



Chaise Longue

★★★★★

Baxter Dury

CORSAIR. £16.99

Penetrating reflections on growing up around his Blockhead dad.

Six albums down, here finally is the crucial piece in the Baxter Dury jigsaw: his unflinching memoir of a childhood torpedoed by his father's success with Ian Dury & The Blockheads. Passed like a hot potato between separated parents, young Baxter is a predictable tearaway, who hospitalises himself regularly, and urinates on Joe Strummer from The Clash firebrand's own roof. After his painter mum's near-fatal car accident, he winds up at his dad's Hammersmith flat, relegated to the couch (hence book title) once an ex-Led Zeppelin roadie known as The Sulphate Strangler moves in as his surrogate carer. Amid the rolling succession of nutcases and capers, Dury Sr looms large, a "pot-soaked Fagin" equally prone to control-freakery and tears, crushed by his own attention-seeking ambitions, but affectionately remembered with mature perspective. Fittingly chaotic and non-linear, but razor sharp and side-splitting throughout, Chaise Longue is one rock autobiography not to miss – a Withnail & I-style cult classic in waiting.

Andrew Perry



God Is In The Radio: Unbridled Enthusiasms 1980-2020

★★★★★

Barney Hoskyns

OMNIBUS. £18.99

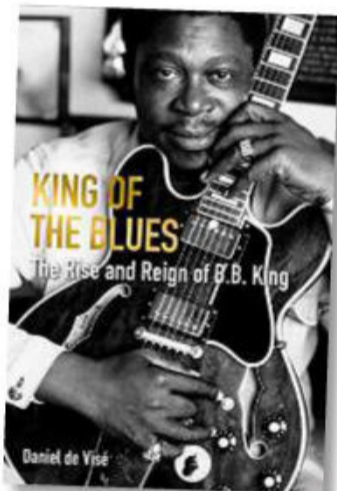
Veteran music writer's 50 greatest hits. Most genres covered.



It's a simple, albeit peculiarly subtitled, notion. Twenty-five previously published short reviews, followed by 25 longer features, from a 1984 NME piece on a weary Bobby Womack to an elegiac 2018 Amy Winehouse tribute for Charles Moriarty's Back To Amy compendium. Hoskyns

isn't a writer for the shorter haul and so daft claims that Ian Curtis's voice was "Mark E Smith meets Stan Ridgway" or that Rufus Wainwright has "10 times" the talent of Elton John pass by unjustified. The longer essays, though, are an unadulterated joy, whether he's re-telling the dark Judee Sill and Sly Stone sagas, re-evaluating Luther Vandross (who confesses "sometimes I get so, so, so, so fuckin' depressed") or Up Up & Away writer Jimmy Webb reminiscing about walking into a Joni Mitchell session and folk singer Eric Andersen hollering "it's Mr Balloons". For all his enthusiasm, Hoskyns' knowledge is deep and his curiosity insatiable. He asks the tougher questions too, whether it's Polly Harvey's relationship to drugs ("she politely slams the door in my face") or if Randy Newman might stop the "fabulously paid hackwork" of film soundtracks and "make another poor-selling Randy Newman album". To precis a lengthy, but fascinating answer: no.

John Aizlewood



King Of The Blues: The Rise And Reign Of B.B. King

★★★★★

Daniel De Vise

ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS. £20

The seventh biography of B.B. King – and perhaps the last?

King Of The Blues does not outdo its forerunners in every respect, but it tracks B.B. King's multifarious career with such efficiency and clarity that surely little of biographical significance remains to be said. It supplements Charles Sawyer's first biography by investigating King's early life in rural Mississippi and Memphis, and strikes an independent path away from the official account composed by David Ritz. Respect for his subject does not prevent De Vise from being candid about King's womanising and gambling, or the disappointing concerts of his later years ("less Live At The Regal and more Prairie Home Companion"). Musically curious readers may sometimes fret at sketchy or impressionistic descriptions of King's guitar playing, and eyebrows will twitch at

phrases like "slide master John Lee Hooker", but the evaluations of King's recordings are comprehensive and almost always judicious.

Tony Russell



Talking To Myself

★★★★★

Chris Jagger

BMG. £17.19

Younger Jagger sibling's freewheeling memoir.



Musician Chris Jagger's autobiography includes a recipe for butter beans: "Fry up lots of garlic... and I mean lots." This comes in between gossipy recollections of the Jagger family's post-war holidays, life on the fringes of The Rolling Stones, a bit part in "risqué romp" The Stud, and contemporary diary entries in which he frets about his lack of money; a harsh contrast to his older sibling's fame and fortune. The junior Jagger knows what readers want, though: stories about Mick, albeit in between recipes and an overly-long entry about the late-'60s hippy trail. It's good fun, if a bit messy, and there's a light touch and plenty of self-awareness. After Chris appears on American Bandstand in 1974, John Lennon discusses his predicament in print. "The interviewer suggested I could change my name," Jagger writes. "But John countered with, 'Ah, then they might not have asked him on in the first place.'" Sad, but true.

Mark Blake

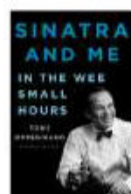
Sinatra And Me: In The Wee Small Hours

★★★★★

Tony Oppedisano And Mary Jane Ross

SCRIBNER. £25

Entertaining insider account of Frank's later years.



Ever since gossip columnist Earl Wilson wrote a book called Sinatra – The Unauthorised Biography (1976), the stack of volumes about Hoboken's most famous son has grown year by year. Kitty Kelley's warts-and-all magnum opus His Way (1986) left some commentators fearing for the author's safety, but Sinatra And Me is another kind of book altogether – personal and compassionate, written by someone who grew close to Frank over three decades and was a pallbearer at the funeral. Tony Oppedisano, a young jazz musician and singer, first met Sinatra at his regular New York City hangout, Jilly's on West 52nd Street, in 1972, eventually becoming his road manager and general assistant. Despite the parade of famous names from Luciano Pavarotti to Madonna passing through the narrative, what illuminates this balanced and myth-debunking book are the private insights, late-night anecdotes, and the musical connection they shared, underpinned by Oppedisano's deep appreciation of Sinatra's awesome talent.

Max Décharné

Who Killed Cock Robin? British Folk Songs Of Crime And Punishment

★★★★★

Stephen Sedley & Martin Carthy

REAKTION/EFDSS. £14.99

High Court judge and top folk singer provide context to lurid tradition.



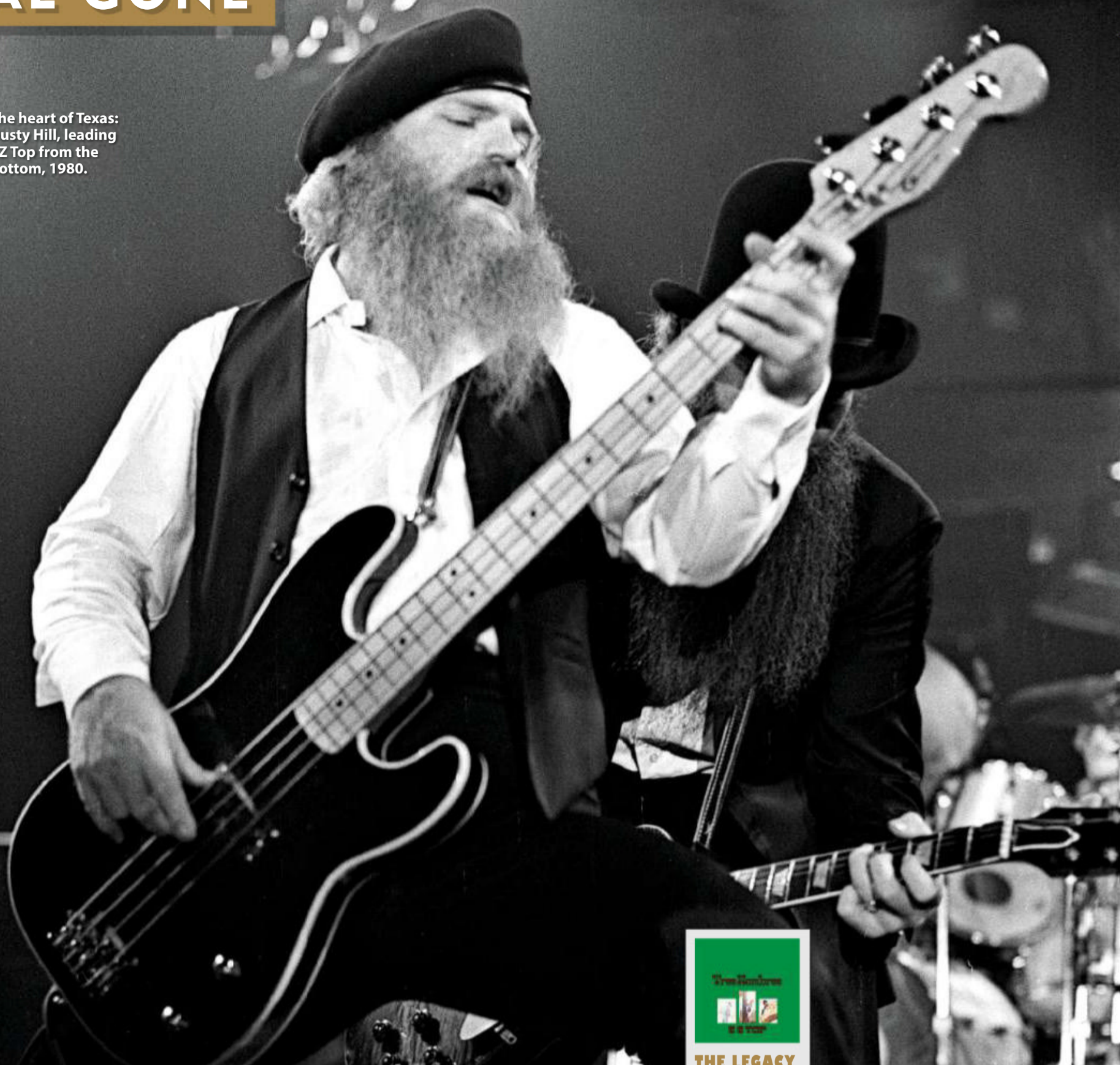
The folk tradition is famously awash with songs of despicable deeds and this pleasingly non-academic anthology engages with some of the goriest and most brutal tales of homicide, incest, piracy, infanticide, thievery, poaching and miscarriages of justice among them. Yet it's far more than that. Carthy and Sedley – who in 1967 compiled The Seeds Of Love anthology before a glittering legal career consumed him – offer insights into the background of these infamous ballads, the mores and social conditions which provoked them, the shifting laws of the times and, crucially, the characters and attitudes of the old singers who preserved them. Many classics feature, from Little Musgrave and Polly Vaughan to Sheath And Knife, Lizzie Wan and one of Carthy's crowning glories, The Famous Flower Of Serving Men. The great achievement of Sedley and Carthy is to give them all a proper setting and renewed relevance.

Colin Irwin

Razor sharp and side-splitting: Baxter Dury, mature survivor of chaos.



The heart of Texas: Dusty Hill, leading ZZ Top from the bottom, 1980.



THE LEGACY

The Album: *Tres Hombres* (London, 1973)
The Sound: Potent, gnarly blues, as defined by their breakthrough single La Grange, a John Lee Hooker-like tune about a Texas brothel. Elsewhere, Hill sings co-lead on Beer Drinkers & Hell Raisers.

1983's *Eliminator* and 1985's *Afterburner*. The playful cars-and-girls aesthetic of videos for Gimme All Your Lovin' and others ("I've got three pretty girls to match you three ugly guys," ribbed director Tim Newman) was presumably some consolation for Hill, then somewhat displaced by ZZ's embracing of synth bass.

His worth to the band – both live and in the studio – had long since

been re-established by the time of 2003's fine, Tejano music-influenced *Mescalero*, while Banger Films' 2020 ZZ Top documentary *That Little Ol' Band From Texas*, secured Hill's part in the trio's legacy. Though the ride hadn't always been smooth – "I joke that we've stayed together because we got separate tour buses early on," he recalled – intra-band relations were cordial at the time of his passing, the bassist insisting that the band's long-term guitar tech Elwood Francis should replace him, thus securing ZZ's future.

Hill is expected to make a posthumous appearance on ZZ Top's 16th studio album. When he died at his home in Houston, fellow bassist Flea mourned "a true rocker who laid it down deep and real", while Kiss's Paul Stanley recalled "an icon and a gentleman."

James McNair Getty

Adios, Hombre

ZZ Top's bassist **Dusty Hill** left us on July 27.

DUSTY HILL's epic 52-year tenure with ZZ Top ended only shortly before he died. Having missed a July 23 show in New Lenox, Illinois due to a hip complaint, he would pass just four days later in his sleep, aged 72. "We will miss your steadfast presence, your good nature and enduring commitment to providing that monumental bottom to the 'Top'," his bandmates Billy Gibbons and Frank Beard said in tribute.

With his deceptively simple-sounding, mostly roots and fifths bass, Hill was ZZ Top's finger-style superglue, an able back-up singer, and lead vocalist on Tush, the classic 1975 blues shuffle they wrote in 10 minutes. For all ZZ's carefully cultivated mystique, Hill was unmistakable too. The beards, the sunglasses; the elaborately patterned Nudie suits and furry guitars spinning like clowns' bow ties: right until the end, Hill

revelled in his and Gibbons' absurdist symmetry.

Born Joseph Michael Hill in Dallas, Texas on May 19, 1949, Dusty studied cello at high school. While Gibbons played in psych-blues band Moving Sidewalks, Hill and ZZ Top's future drummer Frank Beard were in garage-psych act American Blues. By 1970, Hill had joined Gibbons and Beard in ZZ Top. Landmark albums such as 1973's *Tres Hombres* and 1975's live outing *Fandango!* helped define their earthy Tex-Mex twist on Southern boogie and classic blues forms.

After 1976-77's Worldwide Texas Tour, an epic jaunt which saw them perform alongside rattlesnakes, buzzards and a buffalo, Beard suffered drug burn-out and Gibbons absconded. Hill, always more pragmatic, got a job at Dallas/Fort Worth airport and waited. ZZ Top soon signed to Warners and re-invented themselves as unlikely MTV darlings circa

"That monumental bottom to the 'Top'."

BILLY GIBBONS AND FRANK BEARD

Biz Markie

Hip-hop clown prince

BORN 1964

Biz Markie was a true one-off. An inveterate high school prankster, the Long Island-raised Marcel Theo Hall was an instinctive beatboxer and playful rhymers whose pinpoint rhythmic mimicry for Roxanne Shante on 1986 rap hit Def Fresh Crew brought him into the ambit of New York's all-powerful Juice Crew collective.

The crew's jester, 1988's Marley Marl-produced debut *Goin' Off* marked him as an endearing eccentric whose idiosyncratic style took in goofy humour (Pickin' Boogers), cautionary tales (Vapors), gold standard party bangers (Nobody Beats The Biz) and an infallible skills showcase (Make The Music With Your Mouth, Biz). While Top 10 fame arrived with the stymied romance of 1989's deliberately off-key Just A Friend – complete with its video's slapstick Mozart impersonation in a powdered wig – his sample-heavy style was put in jeopardy after a landmark lawsuit from Gilbert O'Sullivan (for using a 20-second burst from Alone Again (Naturally)) was upheld by a federal judge. Ordered to pay a hefty \$250,000 in damages, the verdict transformed the rules of hip-hop production overnight. And while 1993's *All Samples Cleared!* mocked the ruling by basing half its tracks on

renditions of Allen Toussaint's Get Out Of My Life, Woman, the lawsuit effectively stalled Markie's recording career.

Bar a scattershot 2003 comeback (*Weekend Warrior*), Markie traded off his legacy thereafter – voicing cartoons (SpongeBob SquarePants, Adventure Time), making film cameos (Meteor Man, Men In Black II) and starring in TV shows (In Living Color, Wild 'N Out). He lost more weight than any other contestant when he triumphed on 2005's *Celebrity Fit Club*, but it was a small win in a pitched battle against type 2 diabetes. He was also warm-up DJ for the Beastie Boys and collaborated with them on a loopy, garbled version of Elton John's Bennie And The Jets in 1999. In whatever capacity he was in, The Biz never failed to rock a crowd.

Andy Cowan

John Hutchinson

Guitarist, Bowie collaborator

BORN 1944

Known as 'Hutch', Scarborough-born John Hutchinson played guitar in '60s Yorkshire rock'n'roll bands The Tennesseans and The Dave Kirby Five, opening for Little Richard and Gene Vincent. In '66, he joined David Bowie's then-band The Buzz, before the two peeled off



Give me a Buzz: the young David Bowie and (right) Johnny Hutchinson.

and together with Bowie's girlfriend Hermione Farthingale formed short-lived acoustic trio Feathers. Hutch and Bowie's spirited, shared vocal demo recordings of Space Oddity and various other tracks were released in 2019. Post-fame, Bowie didn't forget Hutch and pulled him into The Spiders From Mars to perform his 12-string acoustic guitar parts – while he focused on the theatrics – on the 1973 Ziggy Stardust tour of the States, Japan and the UK. Hutchinson later worked in the oil industry but continued to sing and play with his swing troupe, The Sultans Of Thwing. He published a memoir, *Bowie & Hutch*, in 2014.

Tom Doyle

Ken Thomas

Multi-skilled producer

BORN 1952



Ken Thomas was a rare breed of record producer, effortlessly transitioning from rock to punk, post-punk, industrial and electronica. He started out as a PA engineer; commissions for the BBC saw him arrive at cricket matches in a van with valve Vortexion amps and a pair of horns on top. Starting again at the legendary Trident Studios, he assisted on Queen's early albums and later work with Gentle Giant, Wire, Judas Priest and

Rush revealed his adaptability. "I went more esoteric after that," Thomas said, producing Public Image Ltd, Clock DVA, Au Pairs, Psychic TV and Einstürzende Neubauten. More recently, he produced Sigur Rós's breakthrough album *Ágætis byrjun* and two subsequent records. "Ken had a very big part in creating our sound," read a band statement, adding, "He was the kindest, funniest, loving person, yet beautifully sceptic and sarcastic."

Martin Aston

Jerry Granelli

Charlie Brown's drummer

BORN 1940



A jazz drummer and educator renowned for his rhythmic subtlety and soft brush-work, Jerry Granelli is best remembered for his work in pianist Vince Guaraldi's trio on *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, the celebrated 1965 soundtrack album to the first movie based on Charles M Schulz's Peanuts cartoon (though the album went triple platinum, Granelli was only paid \$120 for his contribution). Born in San Francisco, Granelli began playing violin before a passion for jazz – and the dynamic stick work of Gene Krupa – ignited his love affair with the drums. Although jazz was his speciality, he was a versatile player who worked with a wide range of artists; from Jon Hendricks and Mose Allison to Sly Stone and the Grateful Dead. He also recorded solo and collaboratively, and from 2013, toured with his *Tales Of A Charlie Brown Christmas* show. He died after a fall at his home in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he had lived since becoming a Canadian citizen in 1999, just a few days after hosting a workshop at the Halifax Jazz Festival.

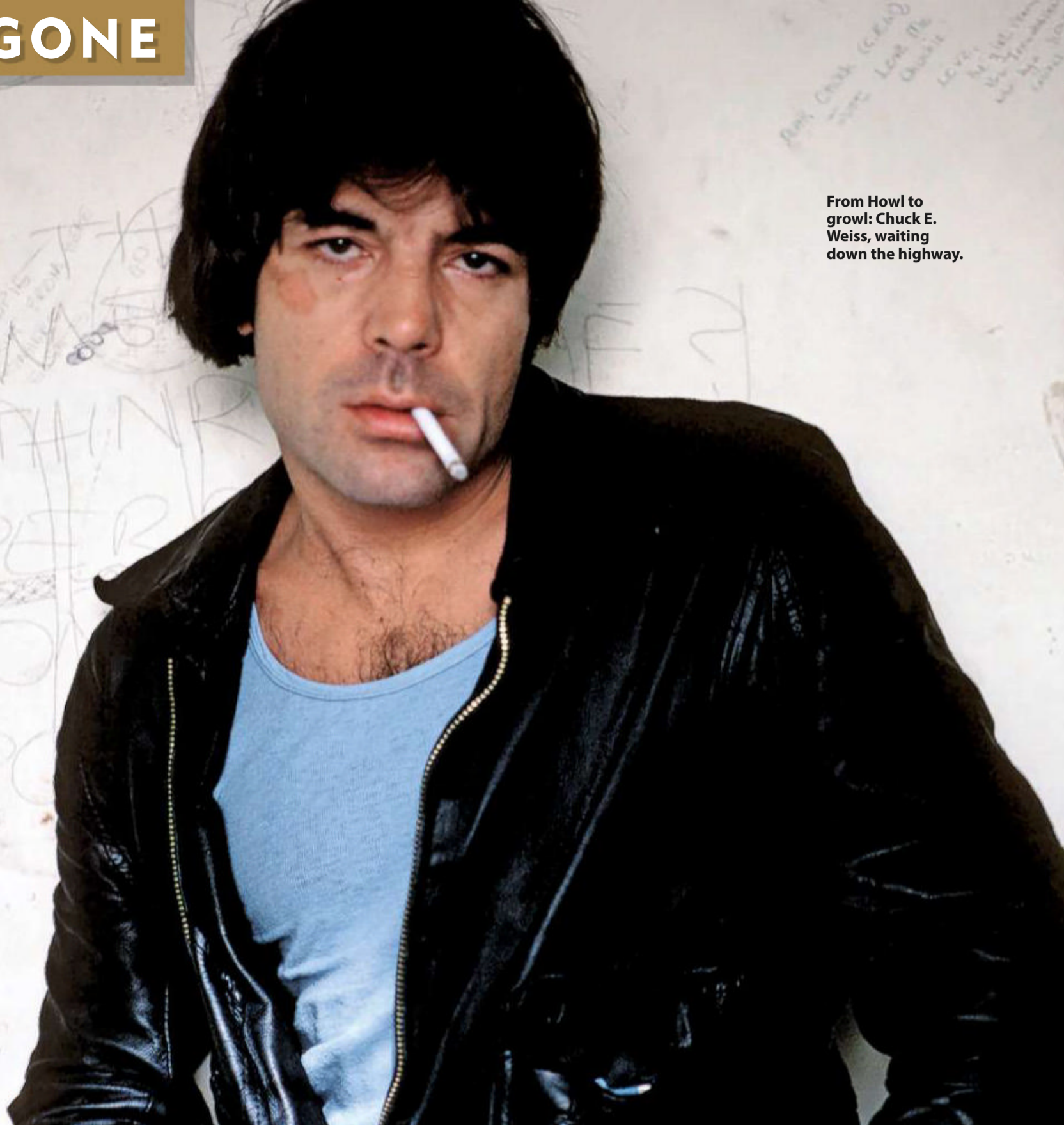
Charles Waring

“He had a big part in creating our sound.”

SIGUR RÓS ON KEN THOMAS



Biz Markie, block rocking crowd-pleaser.



From Howl to growl: Chuck E. Weiss, waiting down the highway.

Old New Songs

Blues rocker and LA scenester **Chuck E. Weiss** left us on July 20.

WHEN RICKIE Lee Jones first met Chuck E. Weiss and Tom Waits, the two men were inseparable. “I could not tell them apart,” she wrote in an ode to the former. Authentic hipsters, the three became the gritty *enfant terribles* of Los Angeles. Eventually Weiss’s biggest fame came after Jones wrote 1979’s Chuck E.’s In Love, a swinging, somewhat fictionalised tale that became her first and biggest hit, winding up at Number 4 on the US pop charts.

Born on March 18, 1945 to Denver record-store owners, a connoisseur’s love of black music led him to drum on tour with Lightnin’ Hopkins and play behind Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf. Moving to LA, he formed a band: Chuck E. Weiss And The Goddamn Liars. They cooked up a grits’n’gravy feast of honking tenor sax rhythm & blues with dollops of cool jazz, Tex-Mex and Hollywood backlot

exotica behind Weiss’s growled lyrics that blended the Beats, Bukowski, film noir and nursery rhymes. At times it seemed as if he was speaking in tongues.

A 1980s Monday night residency at Sunset Strip club The Central culminated in Weiss and pals (including Johnny Depp) buying the joint and renaming it The Viper Room. The watering hole for the young, famous and self-destructive gained notoriety when River Phoenix OD’d there. Weiss found sobriety and mentored others seeking the same.

He released a series of albums, all perfect party records of funky, danceable rock’n’roll. The last was 2014’s *Red Beans And Weiss*:

self-produced with help from Waits, Depp and late drummer Don Heffington, it’s a celebration of life’s rough side, the milieu Weiss made home with all his golden heart. “Chuck E. loved music, pastrami and cats,” says pal Kinky Friedman. The two had recently finished what is probably Weiss’s last song: See You Down The Highway.

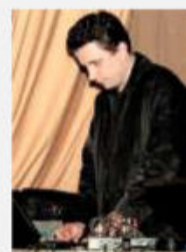
Michael Simmons

“His lyrics blended the Beats, Bukowski, film noir and nursery rhymes.”

Peter Rehberg

Electronic artist/label chief

BORN 1968



Peter Rehberg cut an unpretentious figure in the sometimes-abstruse realm of experimental electronica. The Hertfordshire-raised son of an Austrian father, he settled in Vienna and, as Pita, began releasing his intricately textured music on local imprint Mego in the mid-’90s. Taking the label’s reins after a 2005 relaunch as Editions Mego, Rehberg would oversee revered albums by the likes of Fennesz, Jim O’Rourke and Oren Ambarchi, and abetted by Franco-Swiss composer François J Bonnet, also exhumed key works by 1950s French electro-acoustic laboratory Groupe De Recherches Musicales. Rehberg remained creatively active, not least as KTL alongside Sunn O)))’s Stephen O’Malley, and as one third of Mego ‘supergroup’ Fenn O’Berg. He passed away after suffering a heart attack. “He was one of the most kind, loyal and reliable people I have ever known”, wrote Bonnet in a tribute. “I owe him so much. So do many of us.”

David Sheppard

Bob Sargeant

Pop production ace

BORN C.1946



Bob Sargeant was ubiquitous in late '70s/early '80s post punk and new wave, producing classic debuts, and more, by The Fall, The Beat and The

Monochrome Set. At the same time, he oversaw John Peel sessions with Motörhead, Gang Of Four, Joy Division, Madness and others, and provided the unifying thread between Haircut 100, The Damned and The Woodentops. From Tyneside, his career began in 1966 as singer/organist in Newcastle R&B combo Junco Partners. In 1970/71 he worked with Andy Roberts' Everyone and Mick Abrahams, released 1974's sole solo LP, the

glammy, Mick Ronson-guesting *First Starring Role*, and joined Curved Air for 1976's *Airborne*. Then production called. However, by the late 1980s he had largely retired and looked back on a successful career with satisfaction. "I was always busy, hands on and happy," he said.

Lois Wilson

Byron Berline

Fiddle king

BORN 1944

Not many people turned down the offer to join Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys, but fiddler Byron Berline did, in order to finish his degree in Physical Education in 1965. Although he took up Monroe's offer after graduating, Kansas-born Berline's unique ability to include elements of jazz, pop and blues in his playing would not make its biggest impact until he became



Take a bow: Byron Berline.

part of the fluid country rock collective who inter-laced through various line-ups of Dillard & Clark, The Flying Burrito Brothers and Manassas, while also playing sessions for The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Elton John, James Taylor, Emmylou Harris, Rod Stewart and myriad others. After

several solo long-players and other bluegrass groups – Sundance, BCH and California among them – in 1995 Berline opened the Double Stop Fiddle Shop in Guthrie, Oklahoma, and rarely recorded again, preferring to play live with his own band.

Andy Fyfe

THEY ALSO SERVED

SINGER/WRITER **KATHY MANUELL** (below, b.1948) joined London sunshine folk rockers Design in 1968, who recorded five albums before their 1976 split. She later wrote with Glasgow folk singer **Mae McKenna**. In 1990 she formed trance outfit **New Age Radio** with her partner/Sex Pistols producer

Dave Goodman: together they ran a "clean energy" stage at Glastonbury for 10 years before relocating to Malta, where they recorded psychedelic ambience as the **Internet Cafe Orchestra** and **Mandala Malta**.

KEYBOARDIST/PRODUCER **CLARENCE 'MAC' McDONALD** (b.1944) played piano at Los Angeles funeral homes and nightclubs as a youth, sitting in, aged 16, with **Chico Hamilton**. He later worked with **The Vocals**, who became **The 5th Dimension** in 1966. After serving in Vietnam, McDonald played sessions for artists including **Diana Ross**, **The Jackson 5**, **Gladys Knight** and **Carole King**, enjoyed a live/studio collaboration with **James Taylor** and co-produced (with Maurice White) Number 1s for **Deniece Williams** and **The Emotions**. His other credits included work with **Bill Withers**, **Aretha Franklin**, **Ella Fitzgerald**, **Ray Charles**, **Linda Ronstadt**, **Cheech & Chong** and **Hall & Oates**.



TULSA-BORN ROCKABILLY voice **SANFORD CLARK** (b.1935) met **Lee Hazlewood** in Phoenix in 1956, and cut his song *The Fool*. It reached Number 7 on the Billboard chart. Despite further collaborations with Hazlewood, guitarists **Al Casey** and **Duane Eddy**, plus a re-recording of his hit with **Waylon Jennings**

on guitar in 1965 and 1968's *Return Of The Fool* on Hazlewood's LHI label, further success was denied him. He later worked in construction and as a professional gambler, though in 1985 he was back with Hazlewood and Casey for the *Desert Sun* album. He also played the international oldies circuit.

BUTTERFLY CHILD, AKA Belfast singer-songwriter-multi-instrumentalist **JOE CASSIDY** (b.1969), sculpted luminous dream-pop, first on his friends **A.R. Kane**'s H.ark! label and later Rough Trade for 1993's *Onomatopoeia*. Moving to Chicago in 1997, Cassidy forged the more dance-influenced **Assassins** but settled in film/TV scores before releasing 2015's *Futures*, the first Butterfly Child album in 18 years.

VIOLINIST and singer **ROBBY STEIN-HARDT** (b 1950) co-fronted US prog stars **Kansas**. A prodigiously talented



classical violinist from the age of 8, he joined the newly formed **White Clover** in 1972. The following year the group became **Kansas**, and went on to sell 15 million records, beginning with 1976 breakthrough *Carry On Wayward Son* from the album *Leftoverture*. Steinhardt played with **Kansas** from 1973 to 1982, and again from 1997 to 2006. Not long before his death, he had completed his first solo album.

BASSIST **RICK LAIRD** (b. 1941) was an original member of jazz fusion pioneers **Mahavishnu Orchestra**. Born in Dublin, he moved to London in the early '60s to study at the Guildhall. There, he played with **Brian Auger** and became house bassist at **Ronnie Scott**'s, accompanying **Roland Kirk**, **Sonny Rollins** and **Wes Montgomery**. After winning a scholarship to Berklee, Laird moved to the US, where **John McLaughlin** invited him to join Mahavishnu. In 1977, Laird released one album as band leader, *Soft Focus*, and later worked in photography.

MOSCOW rocker **PYOTR MAMONOV** (below, b.1951) formed Russian experimental rockers **Zvuki Mu** in 1982, as the USSR entered its terminal phase. The group recorded from 1989 to 2005, including 1989's **Brian Eno**-produced self-titled LP, and toured internationally, sharing stages with **Pere Ubu** and **The Residents**. He was also an

actor for director Pavel Lungin, appearing in *Taxi Blues* (1990) and, after a religious epiphany, *The Island* (2006). Having suspended the group in 2005, in 2015 Mamonov reformed **Zvuki Mu** with a new line-up.

DRUMMER **JOEY JORDISON** (b.1975) was a founding member of masked Des Moines nu-metallers **Slipknot**, initially called **The Pale Ones**, in 1995. He appeared on all the group's releases until his 2013 departure, which he later attributed to the neurological disorder transverse myelitis. He also played with **Murderdolls**, **Scar The Martyr**, **Rob Zombie**, **Ministry** and **Korn**, and memorably deputised for **Lars Ulrich** at Metallica's 2004 Download appearance.

HALIFAX-BORN rock and blues voice **JOHN LAWTON** (b.1946) was best-known for fronting **Uriah Heep** in the later '70s. Hitherto he'd sung with Hamburg hard rockers **Lucifer's Friend** and, by way of contrast, the **Les Humphries Singers**, performing with them at the 1976 Eurovision Song Contest. Later, Lawton rejoined **Lucifer's Friend**, formed the **John Lawton Band**, reunited with Heep bandmates and presented travel shows on Bulgarian TV. GUITARIST **JEFF LABAR** (b.1963) joined Pennsylvania hair metallers **Cinderella** in

1985. Their debut LP *Night Songs* would eventually go triple platinum. He stayed in the on-off group until their end in 2017. LaBar also played with bandmate **Eric Brittingham** in **Naked Beggars** and released a solo LP, *One For The Road*, in 2014.

TENNESSEE-BORN keyboardist **GARY CORBETT** (b.1958) played on **Ian Hunter** and **Mick Ronson**'s 1976 tour for Hunter's *You're Never Alone With A Schizophrenic*. Later, he co-wrote **Cyndi Lauper**'s 1984 hit *She Bop* and went on to play with **Foreigner**'s **Lou Gramm** and, from 1987 to 1992, **Kiss** (like other auxiliary members, Corbett was required to play off-stage). In the early '90s he joined **Cinderella**, appearing on *Hot And Bothered*, the band's contribution to the platinum-selling *Wayne's World* soundtrack.

JAZZ BASSIST **JUINI BOOTH** (below, b.Arthur Booth, c.1948) started his music life in Buffalo and moved to New York City in the late '60s. With the spelling of his nickname varying over the years, he went on to play with **Art Blakey**, **Freddie Hubbard**, **Eddie Harris**, **Elvin Jones**, **McCoy Tyner**, **Tony Williams Lifetime**, **Steve Grossman** and others. He also worked with the **Sun Ra Arkestra** from the late '80s.

Jenny Bulley, Celina Lloyd, Martin Aston and Ian Harrison





Good year, chimps: (main, from left) Peter Tork, Davy Jones, Michael Nesmith, Micky Dolenz; (insets from top) hit 45s; songwriters Tommy Boyce (left) and Bobby Hart (right) chat to Dick Clark.

SEPTEMBER 1966 ...The Monkees TV show debuts!

SEPTEMBER 12 As 7.30pm approached this autumn Monday evening, the young American entertainment-seeker had a choice: listen to the radio (The Supremes were Number 1 with You Can't Hurry Love) or watch the third season of daffy castaway sitcom Gilligan's Island start on CBS. Or how about this new music and comedy show on NBC called The Monkees? TV Week's preview had compared it to the Marx Brothers doing A Hard Day's Night. Hmmm...

And so viewers tuned into the first episode of The Monkees, entitled Royal Flush. The comedic action involved a struggling young band of amiable loons rescuing Princess Bettina of Harmonica from her evil uncle Otto, with goofy gags, costume changes, songs and sponsorship from Kellogg's Corn Flakes. The group's jangling debut single Last Train To Clarksville had entered the charts at 67 two days earlier, and as the show became established over the coming weeks, it started to motor. On September 17 it reached Number 43; after September 19's haunted house/inheritance caper Monkee See, Monkee Die, it rose to Number 26. September 26's anti-greed toymaking parable Monkee vs Machine pushed the single again. By November 5 it was Number 1, followed a

week later by their self-titled debut album. By the end of the year, The Monkees were touring to hysterical crowds.

The textbook success story had begun in September '65, when TV producers Bob Rafelson and Bert Schneider placed ads in the trade press, reading: "Madness!! Auditions. Folk & Roll musicians-singers for acting roles in new TV series. Running parts for 4 insane boys, age 17-21..."

From 437 applicants who turned up at the LA casting – never including murder-cultist Charles Manson, despite urban myth – four insane boys were duly signed up. Manchester-born Davy Jones and local Micky Dolenz were both actors who'd sung. Coming with purely musical backgrounds were Texan Michael Nesmith and northeasterner Peter

Tork. They'd never met, but the producers, eyeing the kind of appeal the Fab Four commanded, saw a spark in their manufactured creation's shared chemistry.

Refined via audience feedback, the show was sold to NBC in February 1966. In addition to the long days on set which began in May, publisher Don Kirshner brought in writing/production team Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart to helm the music the group would release. From June, they recorded with sessioners including the Wrecking Crew and The Candy Store Prophets, though a disaffected Nesmith was quick to get in on the writing and producing action, and encouraged his new bandmates to sing and play. "When we did The Monkees Theme," Boyce later told Hit Parader, "we pictured just four kids walking down any street... four buddies in long hair and everybody noticing them... they wrote a whole script for [Last Train To Clarksville]."

September 1, 1966 saw them begin a six-date promo tour at the Hollywood base of production company Screen Gems, meeting the local movers, playing live and showing some episodes. After stop-offs in Chicago (6), Boston (7) and New York (8 and 9), the jaunt concluded back in California on September 11, where winners of a radio phone-in rode a

"...a group that wasn't really a group and yet was a group."

PETER TORK

train to the coastal resort of Del Mar, which had been renamed Clarksville for the day. The Monkees arrived by helicopter, mingled with winners and played their first public live show on the train back. "I was 19, 20 years old," Jones reflected later of their hectic beginnings. "So I was full of the fun of the fair, and so were the other guys."

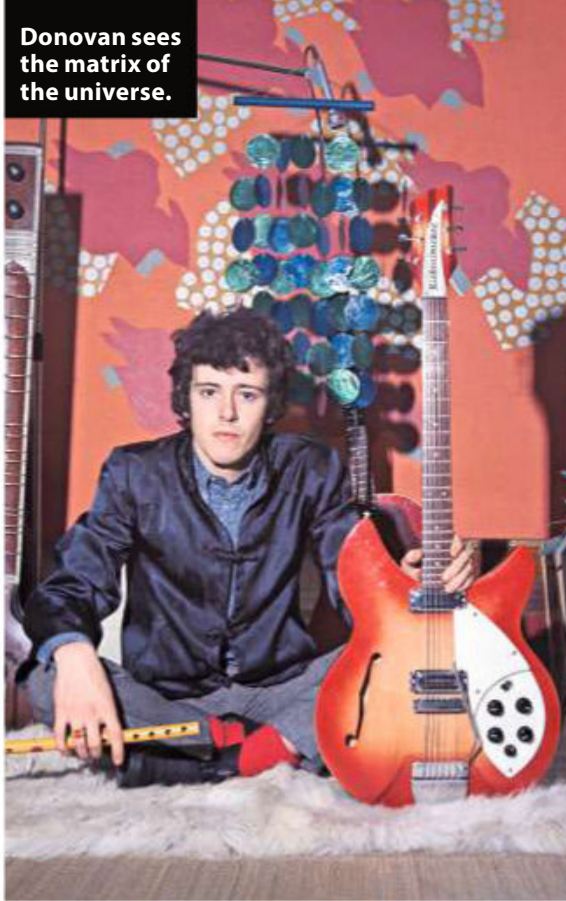
With follow-up single I'm A Believer also topping the US charts in December, there was criticism when Nesmith admitted the group didn't play on their own records – The Byrds' January 1967 45 So You Want To Be A Rock 'N' Roll Star was widely believed to be a dig at the manufactured Monkees. Nesmith denied it, but told MOJO in 1997, "It wasn't other performers that were, er, 'snooty' about The Monkees, it was just journalists who never got the ideology of the whole thing in the first place."

After the group took greater control of their output with 1967's Number 1 album *Headquarters*, they remained on top, and in June '67 the TV show won two Emmy awards. But the simple fun-times couldn't last. In March '68, the decreasingly clean-cut show was cancelled after two series, the hits began to dry up and in December, their psychedelic movie satire *Head* tanked. Peter Tork walked in early '69, telling journalist Bruce Pollock in 1982, "It was a unique phenomenon, to be a member of a group that wasn't really a group and yet was a group." By 1971 it was all over.

Except it never would be, really. The Monkees' afterlife on TV continued, and their reunions were frequent. Though Jones and Tork are both gone, this September Dolenz and Nesmith begin what could be their last US tour together. Happy to forever be Micky the wacky drummer, Dolenz reflected on life in The Monkees to *Closer* in 2018: "We just caught lightning in a bottle."

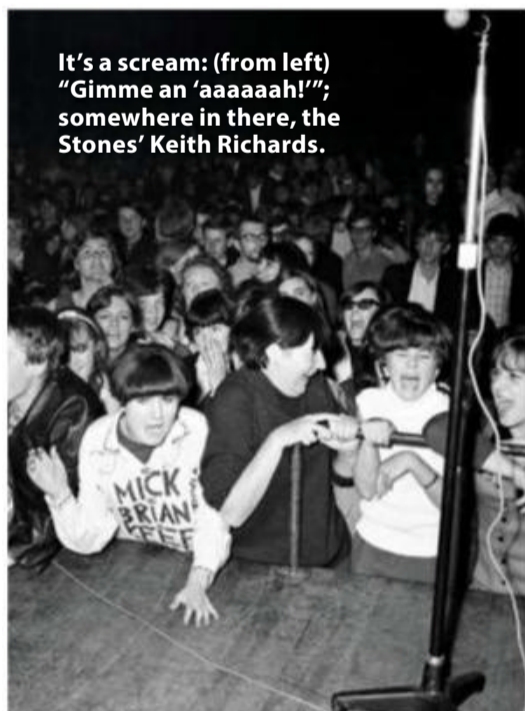
Ian Harrison

Donovan sees the matrix of the universe.



Donovan's top Trip

SEPTEMBER 3 Donovan's *Sunshine Superman* is Number 1 in the US. The disc, featuring Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones, is backed with *The Trip*. Though Donovan later explained the song as a love letter to his future wife Linda Lawrence, he told MOJO, "sunshine is a nickname for acid. The Superman is the person capable of entering higher states because it's not easy to go into the fourth dimension and see the matrix of the universe." The two songs' references to blown minds and being tripped out mark a conspicuous mainstream pop airing for the LSD experience. Due to contractual difficulties, the British issue of *Sunshine Superman* is delayed but finally hits UK Number 2 in January 1967.



STONES RIOT AT RAH

SEPTEMBER 23 The Rolling Stones begin a 12-date tour at the Royal Albert Hall, supported by the Ike & Tina Turner Revue, The Yardbirds, Peter Jay & The New Jay Walkers and Long John Baldry. The Stones are greeted by a mini-riot, greatly enjoyed by Brian Jones, and filmed by Peter Whitehead on a 16mm camera. The film-maker

later said Jagger told him he was going to incite a stage invasion, adding: "After a couple of songs, he turned around and said 'Ready?' and within 15 seconds the kids were on-stage swinging around his neck." Whitehead later intercuts the footage with scenes of the Stones in drag for a promo clip for *Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing In The Shadow?*

ALSO ON!



NAPPY RASH

7 Napoleon XIV's (above) *They're Coming To Take Me Away Ha-Haaa!*, a twisted novelty song about mental illness, peaks at UK Number 4, having reached US Number 3 in August. It's the work of songwriter **Jerry Samuels**.

GOOD SPOCKIN'

8 Space opera *Star Trek* debuts on US TV: its theme, written by **Alexander Courage**, is sung by **Loulie Jean Norman** of the Ray Conniff Singers. In the coming years, stars **William Shatner**, **Nichelle Nichols** and **Leonard Nimoy** will all release their own albums.

ACE FACES

15 *Small Faces* score their only UK Number 1 with *All Or Nothing*. This month they also play a gruelling 28-date British tour.

HERB RIDES AGAIN

21 **Herb Alpert And The Tijuana Brass** depart for a European tour. He currently has five albums in the US Top 40, three of which topped the charts.

HELLO JIMI

24 **Jimi Hendrix** arrives in England for the first time, accompanied by manager **Chas Chandler**. He's reputed to have changed the spelling of his name from Jimmy on the plane over. They audition for a new group at London's Birdland club, and meet bassist **Noel Redding** on September 29.

TOP TEN

NETHERLANDS
SINGLES
SEPTEMBER 17

1 **YELLOW SUBMARINE/ELEANOR RIGBY** THE BEATLES PARLOPHONE

2 **BLACK IS BLACK** LOS BRAVOS BARCLAY

3 **LADY JANE** DAVID GARRICK PYE

4 **WITH A GIRL LIKE YOU** THE TROGGS FONTANA

5 **SUMMER IN THE CITY** THE LOVIN' SPOONFUL KAMA SUTRA

6 **DANS JE DE HELE NACHT MET MIJ** KARIN KENT DECCA

7 **I SAW HER AGAIN** THE MAMAS AND THE PAPAS RCA VICTOR

8 **OH, OH WHAT A KISS** WILL ANDY CNR

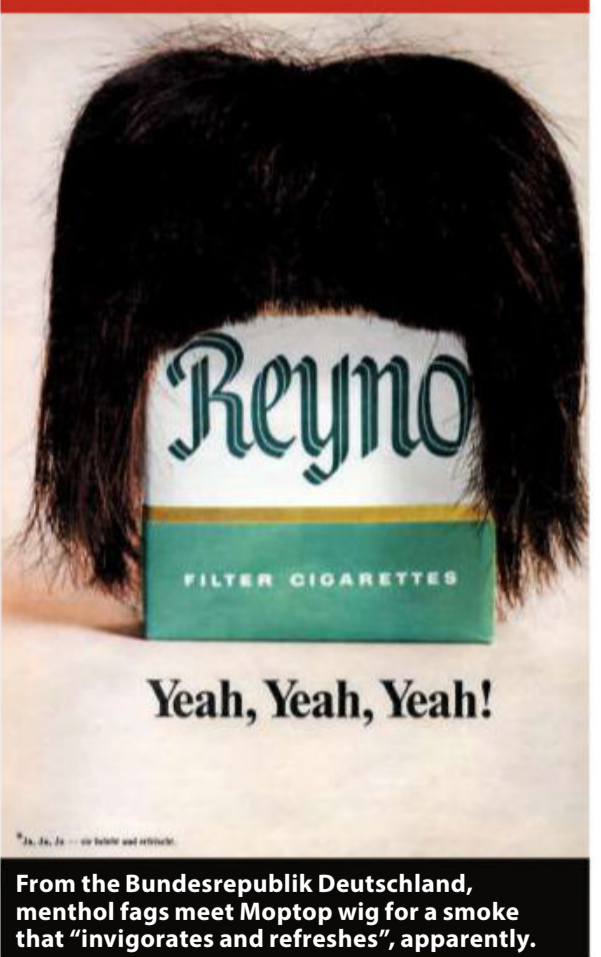
9 **MOTHER'S LITTLE HELPER/LADY JANE** THE ROLLING STONES DECCA

10 **SUNNY AFTERNOON** THE KINKS PYE



See them again: The Mamas And The Papas at 7.

AD ARCHIVE 1966



From the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, menthol fags meet Moptop wig for a smoke that "invigorates and refreshes", apparently.



Was Zappa a Furry Freak Brother?

Brain fried from figuring out the gnarliest musical mysteries? Permit us to provide enlightenment.

Fred Dellar has been a mine of information to me since his Fred Fact days on the NME and I am sure he would have had no trouble with this one. I remember reading sometime in the early '80s that Frank Zappa was to play Phineas Freak in a film version of the anarchic hippy comic *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*. Such inspired casting had me hanging on for years. Was production ever started and who was to have played *Freewheelin' Franklin* and *Fat Freddy*?

Mark SJ Weller, Shepton Mallet

MOJO says: Zappa may have hated all drugs except caffeine and nicotine, but him playing the dope-addled Phineas is a tempting prospect. As for whether it was ever a goer, Tony Bennett of legendary UK comics publisher Knockabout asked FFB's creator Gilbert Shelton, who sent word back. "Zappa was never up for playing Phineas," Bennett relays. "This was the period when Universal Studios had bought an option, which they held onto through renewals for about five years and got no further with the project... as happened on many occasions, several names were touted around. It is quite likely that Zappa knew nothing about it at all." He adds that Universal toyed with the idea of adding a Freak Sister to the mix. While there was an unofficial Freak Brothers porn film called *Up In Flames* in 1978 (which also "starred" a rip-off of R. Crumb's Mr Natural character), a new animated Freak Brothers series made by the producers of sci-fi comedy *Rick & Morty* is currently creeping out online, voiced by Woody Harrelson and John Goodman among others, with oodles of '60s tuneage. Incidentally, if Zappa really had been in the frame, we're saying Dennis Hopper would have made a good *Freewheelin' Franklin* and Michael J Pollard could have carried off *Fat Freddy* with aplomb. And for Shelton's



Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers comics, see knockabout.com.

FROM SAHB TO QUAD?

In 1978, the BBC broadcast a session by Alex Harvey on the Alan Freeman show. It appeared in 2016 on *The Last Of The Teenage Idols* box set, credited to 'Alex Harvey with QUAD'. Who were the musicians in QUAD and how did their involvement come about?

Michael Scott, via e-mail

MOJO says: Our resident SAHB specialist James McNair points to John Neil Munro's 2002 biography *The Sensational Alex Harvey*, which refers to an unnamed outfit featuring keyboardist Tommy Eyre, guitarist Matthew Cang, bassist Gordon Sellar, drummer Simon Chatterton and saxophonist Don Weller and Alex playing a one-off gig at The London Palladium in March 1978, the same month as the Alan Freeman session, so odds are it's them. As for the band moniker, there's speculation that it's all down to an engineer misreading a reference to quadrophonic sound on a tape reel. But can anyone out there say for sure?

RAEL ON

Having just picked up the latest remaster of *The Who Sell Out*, I'm puzzled by the rather severe edit that cuts half of the first verse of Rael (Part 1). This edit occurs on both the stereo and mono versions, but I've never heard it before. I'm aware of the story of the cleaning lady at Talent Masters Studios, New York, who threw the unboxed multitrack tape in the bin and damaged the beginning of the recording, but this doesn't seem to have affected earlier releases.

Was it originally released this way?

Jeff Crawford, Adelaide, South Australia

MOJO says: It was. The original mono and stereo versions of Rael 1 gloried in a slightly clunky edit after the first verse until Andy McPherson's 1995 remix/remaster restored seven seconds of

Comic turns: (clockwise from far left) Frank Zappa with (insets from top) Phineas, *Freewheelin' Franklin*, *Fat Freddy*; *The Who* puzzle over a missing seven seconds; source LP *The Who Sell Out*; *Bow Wow Wow* get it taped on 1980's *Your Cassette Pet*.

goldfish-referencing lyrics. Staying loyal to the original album version,

as Super Deluxe versions do, the 2021 edition gives us options with the extra lines and without. Pete Townshend described the compiling process as "lovely", incidentally, and declares himself, "very pleasantly surprised."

VIDDY WELL!

Regarding videos that were made of entire albums (MOJO 332), let's not forget Elton John's 1981 album *The Fox* (released as *Visions*).

Joseph Cocucci, via e-mail

MOJO says: Thanks also to readers who pointed out other acts whose albums got the video treatment, such as Beck's *The Information* (Interscope, 2006), Kate Bush's *The Line, The Cross And The Curve* (PMI, 1993), *Nine Types Of Light* by TV On The Radio (Interscope, 2010) and the visuals Kraftwerk created for their live albums-in-full audio-visual box 3D *The Catalogue* (Parlophone, 2017).

REET OBSOLETE

Re: Ask MOJO 333's request for songs whose topicality has dated. Your correspondent David Lloyd asks for examples of songs referencing decimal coinage – the finest of these was surely Max Bygraves' 1970 banger *Decimalisation*: "'Cos we've got decimalisation, decimalisation, there's a hundred new pennies now for every pound.'" Yours nostalgically...

John Burscough, N Lincs

MOJO says: Well, it's not a bad way of remembering. For other unnerving blasts of displaced modernity, thanks for the following suggestions: Bow Wow Wow's C-30 C-60 C-90 Go (EMI, 1980), Partners In Rhymes' *Pager Checkin'* (Northland, 1998) and anyone who included ".com/dot com" in an album title (we're looking at you Marillion and Jethro Tull).

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Klipsch
the Fives



High Deal Speakers

Win! The Fives powered speakers from Klipsch Audio.

FOUNDED BY hi-fi pioneer Paul W. Klipsch in 1946, the Klipsch loudspeaker company are world-renowned for their high-end audio products. Part of their award-winning Heritage Wireless series, The Fives are a versatile pair of beautifully crafted speakers that can connect to virtually everything. With HDMI-ARC to connect directly to a TV, it produces high fidelity sound from dedicated right and left speakers. With a built-in phono pre-amp, The Fives connect directly to your turntable for superior stereo sound. Made with luxury materials, The Fives incorporate award-winning, proprietary Klipsch Reference acoustic horn-loaded technology and tuning to deliver loud and

precise audio with enhanced bass and low distortion. With custom-designed built-in amplifiers, they deliver room-filling sound while eliminating the need for an audio/video receiver. They're worth £839 per pair, and we have a set to give away!

So have at MOJO's crossword and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk and please make sure to type CROSSWORD 335 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, email and phone number. The closing date for entries is **October 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

And, continuing in the spirit of the great Fred Dellar, can we get a handclap for our new crossword master, Michael Jones?

www.klipsch.com/the-fives

ANSWERS

MOJO 332

Across: 1 Lana Del Rey, 6/24 Steve Marriott, 8 Universal Soldier, 11 Dreamer, 14 Breakfast In Bed, 17 Art, 18 Ways, 21 Oh Diane, 23 Earl, 25 Name, 26 Riot, 27 Regret, 29 Ida, 30 Eels, 31 Inspiral, 32 Area, 33 Dean, 35 M.G.M.T., 36 Nadine, 37 Born Again, 39 Lind, 40 Ha Ha, 41 Hersh, 45 David Watts, 47 Ure, 48 Little Man, 50 Randy Bachman, 53 Ted, 54 Warchild, 57 Tune, 58 Eli, 59 F.B.I., 60/68 Wade In The Water, 64 M.F.S.B., 65 Sale, 66 One On One, 67 Sergio.

Down: 1 Laura Nyro, 2 Noise, 3 Drew, 4 Laser, 5 Yes, 6 Sal Valentino, 7 Vee, 9 Leaving Eden, 10 Range, 12 Reward, 13 Rattle And Hum, 14 B.T.O, 15 Thompson, 16 Eartha Kitt, 19 Aria, 20 Sitar, 22 Horslips, 28 Biograph, 29 I Am The Law, 32 Atlantic, 34 A Brand New Bag, 38 Rainbirds, 42 Era, 43 Rent, 44 Hard Times, 46 Single, 49 Evil, 51 Cecil, 52 Meet, 55 Heinz, 56 Limo, 59 Fool, 61 Ear, 62 Nena, 63 Hole.

Winners: Stephen Sargent of Stevenage wins a Complete Synthesizer Exploration Station from Moog.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

- 1 See photoclude A (4,6)
- 9 Mary Margaret or just Mary (5)
- 10 Dire Straits' tour for *Love Over Gold* was transformed into this live album (7)
- 11 ---- Strap, and maybe a boy with it (4)
- 12 Getting on a bit with Clapton's sock (3)
- 13 Stephen Duffy's amorous request (4,2)
- 17 Soft Boy Robyn (9)
- 19 Gaga, Sovereign or Saw? (4)
- 22 He would have been the target market for The High Numbers (3)
- 23 Dr who killed the barber (10)
- 24 See 68
- 25 Singer and performer and civil rights activist Horne (4)
- 26 And A Bang On The --- (Waterboys) (3)
- 27 What Patti Smith got from Them (6)
- 29 ---- Puppets (4)
- 33 They were Disappointed in 1992 (10)
- 34 It was Paul McCartney's new one after *New* (5,7)
- 39 Big Country's second LP (9)
- 40 Not feeling a thing about Linkin Park (4)
- 41 Trunk calls coming from Mark Lanegan's band? (9,5)
- 43 Up Around The ---- (Creedence) (4)
- 44 A bit of graphic language spoken in this genre (3)
- 47 Prince got naked on this LP sleeve (8)
- 48 Costello off in a different direction (5)
- 50 America's man is half the man that made 13 across (3)
- 52 Bingo Hand Job's usual name (1.1.1.)
- 54 Could be Washington, or Shore (5)
- 56 "Coast to coast, LA to Chicago..." (Sade) (6,8)
- 58 Butch from Garbage (3)
- 60 Shades of a Donovan track (7)
- 62 "Ambient supergroup" Channel Light ----- (6)
- 64 Kate Bush was never for this (4)
- 66 McCann, McKeown or, on guitar, Paul (3)
- 67 Roxy Music's Brian (3)
- 68/24 Buddy Rich album that featured *Jumping At The Woodside* (4,4,3,5)
- 69 Neil, who's been searchin' for the dolphins in the sea (4)

DOWN

- 1 Faith who had a hit, Again (5)
- 2 Maggie, Terre, Suzzy's folk family name (5)
- 3 He was born Michael Balzary (4)
- 4 *It's A Shame About* --- (Lemonheads) (3)
- 5 Neptunes spin-off that achieved Rock Star status (1.1.1.1.)
- 6 Italian prog act who soundtracked Dario Argento's *Suspria* (6)
- 7 Will Oldham's first incarnation (6,8)
- 8 Dream A Little Dream, she advised (4,4)
- 11 The state of this Neil Young track! (7)
- 14 The sort of sweet music in which Otis goes Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (3,4)
- 15 "Would you be there, be there, be there for me?" (Foals) (5)
- 16 It takes more to set off this Ms (8)
- 18 See photoclude B (4)
- 19 How big are Kim and Louis? (3)
- 20 Andy Fairweather Low's corner (4)
- 21 Snaith, AKA Manitoba, AKA Caribou (3)
- 22 A-ha man's issues of MOJO (4)
- 26 Who get lucky sometimes, according to Tom Petty? (4,3,6)
- 28 Only person to go from *Forever Changes* to *Four Sail* (6,3)
- 30 Pearl Jam's debut long-player (3)
- 31 No one is this think the Pistols (8)
- 32 Claim clodhoppers Genesis (1,4,5)
- 35 The Boys turned nasty at Christmas (4)
- 36 See photoclude C (4,8)
- 37 ----- *Of Symmetry* (Muse album) (6)
- 38 A place for The Handsome Family? Far from it (3,4)
- 42 Hunter, Motown composer who wrote for Marvin Gaye and Martha Reeves (3,2)
- 45 God had one for Drake (4)
- 46 Jazz trumpeter Baker (4)
- 49 ----- *Park* (Beth Orton album) (7)
- 51 Her voice is soft like summer rain (6)
- 53 The ----, who shifted into 63 Down (4)
- 55 Catchy riff from Peter on bass (4)
- 57 Terry Reid flows in 1973 (5)
- 59 Chandler, the Duke Of Earl (4)
- 61 Abba and ABC need urgent help (1.1.1.)
- 63 Initially, Jeff Lynne's group (1.1.1.)
- 65 Swamp pop king Bernard (3)

Complicated game (clockwise from main): Andy Partridge (left) and Colin Moulding in XTC's duo-days; as Helium Kidz on Swindon Viewpoint TV, 1974, with Terry Chambers (bottom right) and Dave Cartner (bottom left); Moulding today.



Colin Moulding and XTC

They met over a bluesy jam. The end finally came after “the longest goodbye in history.”

HELLO NOVEMBER 1972

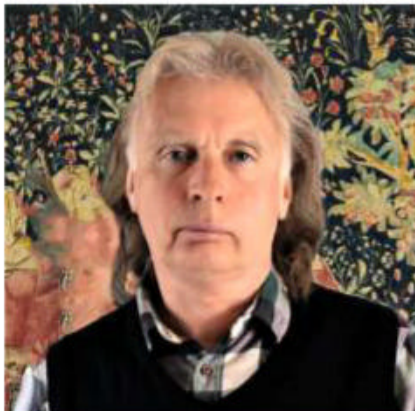
Kempster's music store was the place to go in Swindon on a Saturday morning – you'd hear somebody thumping out Smoke On The Water or something as you climbed the stairs. [Owner] Jeff Kempster was an all-round good egg.

On this day, I was quite surprised to see Andy [Partridge] in there, taking guitars off the wall – very expensive guitars, I might add, Rickenbackers and Gibsons, and playing them quite competently. I knew Andy because we used to go to the same school. So, I just pulled up a stool beside him and picked a bass guitar off the wall and we started playing along together, just a general bluesy jam, I think.

Then [Partridge manager] Dave Bennett and Andy came to the caretaker's bungalow at Headlands School where I was living, and asked if I wanted to come to a jam session in somebody's garage. How could I turn down that invitation, on a cold winter's night? This local character called Martin Church, who had a van, it was his parents' garage on Church Walk North. We probably played some early stuff of Andy's, you know, he was writing even then, and maybe a few Stones covers.

Andy had a word in my ear and said that he wasn't particularly happy with the arrangement he was in [with bandmates Nervous Steve and Paul Wilson], and would I be interested in starting something up? I knew Terry [Chambers, drums], so the nucleus of XTC was born right at that moment.

Getty



“I almost became Andy's adversary, I think.”

COLIN MOULDING

You know, Andy was the writer and he's got a sort of a dictatorial kind of way of going on, and me and Terry kind of went along with it. It didn't feel like a big break or anything, and little did I know I had five very dispiriting years ahead of me. We started off as Star Park, then became the Helium Kidz, and then I think for a short time, The Snakes. Then punk confused the hell out of record companies and they pretty much signed everybody, us included! So I think the moment of arrival was when we walked in on our first recording session at Abbey Road [in April 1977]. In the foyer there was all these pictures of The Beatles, almost like a shrine, you know. It was very exciting and very frightening. Fear, confused with a thrill.

GOODBYE SUMMER 2006

It was perhaps the longest goodbye in history, because nothing really happens. It was a slow kind of estrangement after [2000's *Wasp Star* (Apple Venus Volume 2)]. I wasn't sure whether Andy wanted to make another record. I certainly did. I suppose the turning point came two or three years later, when he said, “I want to release all my demos, do you want to release yours?” I got the impression he was going for broke, and I really didn't want to do that [eight volumes of Partridge's *Fuzzy Warbles* were released from 2002-06].

We'd lost Dave [Gregory, guitar] by then, remember. There was something about the dynamic with the three of us that I think was cohesive. Once Dave left, I almost became Andy's adversary, I think. I'd felt that he was perhaps becoming slightly more dictatorial than he otherwise had been.

A few years went by. We were trundling along, distributing the remains of

the studio. I think I took some gear round to Andy's house, part of the patchbay, and it was pretty much, “Well, here it is old boy, have fun,” you know? One of those conversations. One doesn't talk about one's estrangement, that's why we were estranged.

The words “I quit” hadn't been uttered by anybody. The final axe fell when we had arguments over money. It got pretty petty, really. That was the basis of the argument that split XTC really, though there was no official announcement. I remember for two years after, I watched TV and contemplated my future. Later, I started to do sessions for Billy Sherwood, who's the bass player of Yes now, so I owe everything to him for getting me back into it.

[Andy and I] didn't speak for a long time, except about business, and then it was quite terse. But we're quite cordial with each other now, it's probably as good as it's been for quite some time. Would we do XTC again? (laughs) I don't think we would, because I'm not sure whether I could put up with his dictatorial ways any more, or whether he could put up with me.

I am beginning to make music again. I'm too old to make albums, they take a long time, [but] whatever material I have, the public can have it if they wish.

As told to Ian Harrison

Colin Moulding's *The Hardest Battle* EP is out now on Burning Shed.





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